

Feminist Governance Toolkit

For boards of specialist gendered violence services in Queensland



WorkUp
QUEENSLAND

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Taking Care

This resource discusses domestic, family, and sexual violence.

It is important to understand that people working in the sector, including board members, may have lived experience of gendered violence and trauma and, at times, need support.

As you go through these materials, please take a break and access help if you need to.

Here are some expert organisations that offer both personal and professional support when you may need it:



WorkUP Queensland is the Sexual Violence, Women's Health and Wellbeing, and Domestic and Family Violence sector's partner in supporting a strong, skilled and engaged workforce.

We bring together The Healing Foundation's strong connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and healing, backed by the expertise of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) in facilitating evidence-based policy and practice.

Informed and driven by frontline providers, WorkUP aims to address workforce-related challenges while taking opportunities to grow and equip the workforce and better support current and future workers.

Funded by the Queensland Government, we are proud to support the people who work in this sector who make such a significant, often pivotal impact in ending violence against women.

Together, WorkUP Queensland and the sector have created a plan to grow, retain, develop, support, connect, and sustain the workforce. This Feminist Governance Toolkit is one part of our important work. We hope that you may be able to use it to guide your thinking and complement your practices as a professional, diligent and compassionate board member.

Acknowledgment

The Feminist Governance Toolkit was developed by WorkUP Queensland in partnership with Inner Vision Consulting and Red Bandana Productions.

Representatives from the Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing sector contributed their ideas, knowledge, and practice wisdom to inform its development.

We thank everyone involved for their input and commitment to supporting good governance in the gendered violence sector.



Who is this resource for?

This toolkit has been designed specifically for boards and board members of specialist gendered violence services in Queensland using intersectional, feminist values, frameworks and practice principles. It supports board members to connect to and understand the purpose and context of the work that their service performs.

It is designed to complement (but not replace) specialist Not-For-Profit Governance and Cultural Governance Training. Links to these are provided at the end of this resource.

How can this resource be used?

We recommend that you watch the suggested videos and use the accompanying reflective questions to learn about yourself and your role as a board member. The activities and reflective questions for collective board reflection and development should also be very helpful.

You also might want to embed this toolkit into board induction processes, along with the Workforce Capability Framework and Organisational Reflective Questions.

The Workforce Capability Framework outlines the capabilities required by people who work in the gendered violence sector to deliver safe, effective and respectful responses for those impacted by violence.

Given the responsibility of boards and leadership groups to create productive, safe, and supportive

environments, a set of Organisation Reflective Questions has been crafted for each capability domain to prompt, provoke, and identify opportunities for improvement. These questions are designed to stimulate ideas, stretch goals, and validate the work and thinking already occurring at the board and senior leadership levels.

Disclaimer. This resource is designed to complement specialist Governance Training with context and considerations for boards of specialist gendered violence services in Queensland.

The information provided is not exhaustive and users are encouraged to undertake further research and training to support their development as a board member.

Please see the resource list for links to specialist Governance Training providers and resources on page 96 of this document.

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INTRODUCTION

What is intersectionality?

The term 'intersectionality' was coined by civil rights activist and Professor Kimberle Crenshaw (1989). Professor Crenshaw recognised that multiple forms of oppression and discrimination can combine and be experienced by individuals in unique and 'intersecting' ways.

Understanding this and bringing an intersectional lens to our work means recognising and addressing the multiple, often complex and overlapping forms of barriers and discrimination that individuals face. This approach is critical to ensuring services are inclusive and operate equitably, and that clients are considered holistically.

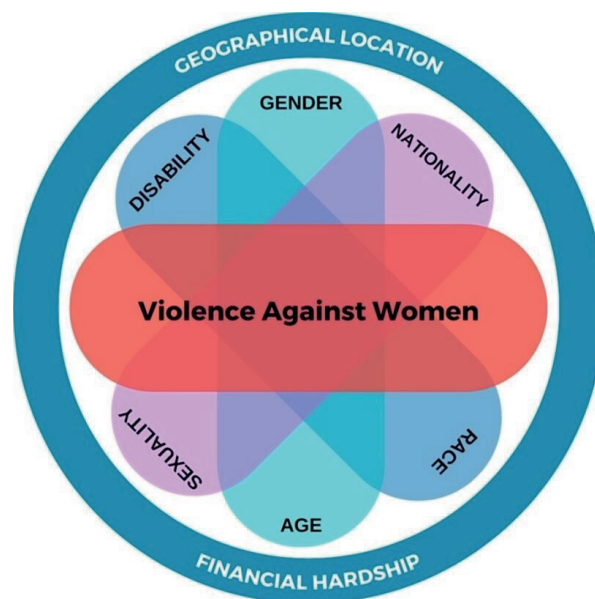


Diagram QCDFV Research, 2021



What is
Intersectionality?

CLICK HERE

What is feminism?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes feminism as *a belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organised activity on behalf of women's rights and interests.*

If you would like to learn more about feminism watch **Feminists Speak Out – United Nations**

CLICK HERE



INTRODUCTION

What is governance?

Governance is the framework of rules, systems, and processes that are in place to govern an organisation and hold it, and its people accountable for achieving its purpose, vision and mission.

Elements of governance include legal requirements, accountability, stakeholder expectations and ethical considerations.

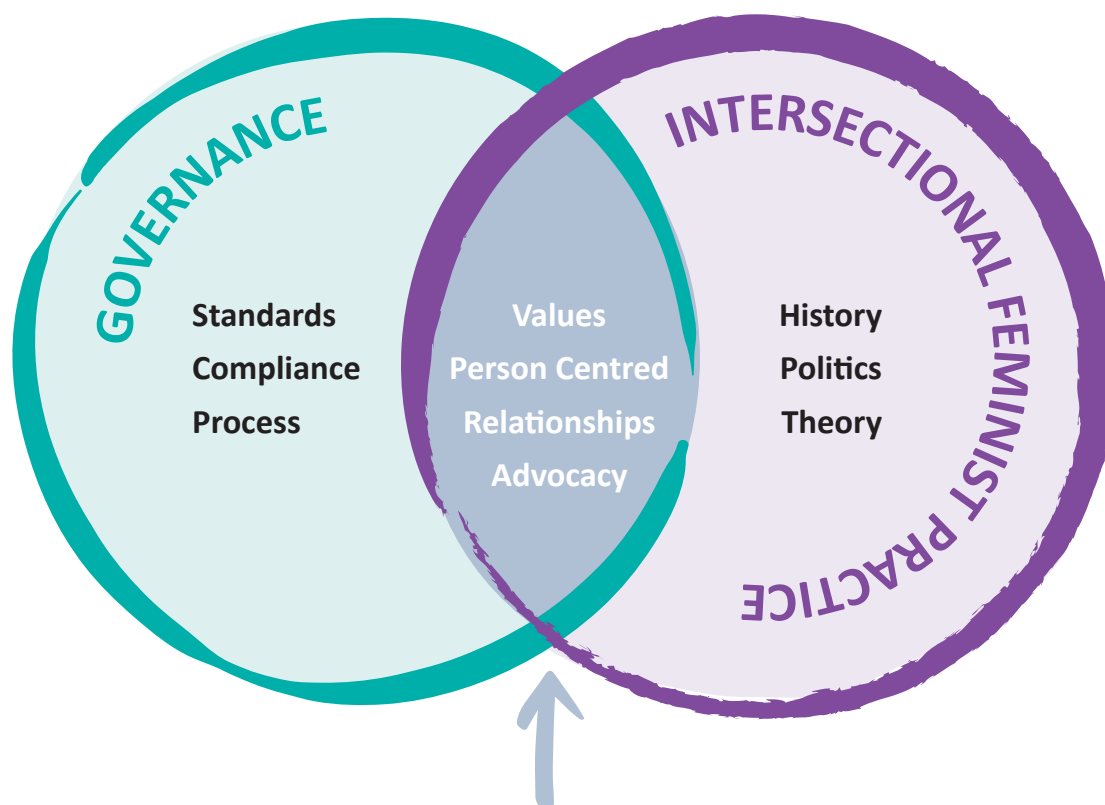
What do we mean by intersectional feminist governance?

Intersectional feminist governance applies an intersectional lens to organisational practices and policies. It centres the voices of those experiencing overlapping forms of oppression, such as women of colour or gay women or women who live in poverty, to understand the depths of inequalities and the relationships among them.

It recognises historical contexts, including long histories of violence and systematic discrimination, which have created deep and profound inequities that affect marginalised groups.

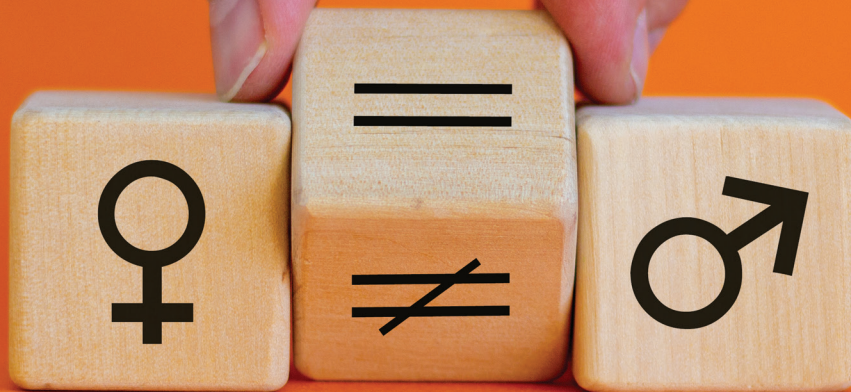
By integrating intersectional feminist principles into governance, not-for-profit organisations can promote inclusivity, equity, and social justice.

Intersectional feminist governance ensures that organisations, at all levels, actively consider the diverse and often complex experiences and needs of all individuals, especially those facing compounded forms of discrimination, as they make decisions that shape policy, practice, and strategy.



INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST GOVERNANCE

Inner Vision Consulting & WorkUP Queensland, 2024



Connection to purpose



In this section, we explore the purpose of gendered violence services and how a board and its members can best contribute to the achievement of their vision and mission.

This content will be helpful to build our knowledge of why gendered violence services exist, understand how they operate and suggest important considerations that could be meaningfully factored into strategy development.

Importantly, we look at ourselves to understand why and how we wish to contribute to the board and the values and beliefs we bring.



SHOWING UP – BELIEFS, VALUES AND SKILLS



This is an important question to ask ourselves because our motives impact how we show up in our leadership, our decisions, and our impact on others. This section is about being reflective and self-aware so that we can contribute most effectively to the board of a gendered violence service.

Being reflective and self-aware helps us to:

- > Understand our strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations, as well as our impact on other people
- > Develop empathy, compassion, and respect
- > Foster a culture of learning, reflection, and genuine feedback
- > Enhance communication and interpersonal skills
- > Identify and address stereotypes, assumptions or biases that may affect our behaviour or decision-making
- > Recognise and manage our emotions, stress, and vicarious trauma, and seek support if we need to
- > Act with accountability and integrity and align our actions with the values and goals of the organisation we serve
- > Notice and appreciate the strengths and diversity that our fellow board members, clients and workers bring.

Strong self-reflective practice helps us to:

- > Lead in a way that enables effective service operation, high-quality services and the wellbeing of workers
- > Operate in the best interests of the service we govern.



Dot down your thoughts

What am I hoping to achieve by contributing to the board of a gendered violence service?

.....

How might I bring reflection and self-awareness to my role on the board?

.....

How do I want to show up in my role as a board member?

SHOWING UP – BELIEFS, VALUES AND SKILLS

Self-awareness is often defined as conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives and desires. It's key to self-control, decision-making, creativity, learning, growth and self-fulfillment. It creates value and helps you to influence others. It is a tool to proactively manage your beliefs, thoughts, emotions, decisions and behaviours.

Cultivating self-awareness requires an introspective approach, a system and a process to actively and consciously engage in the recognition of ourselves as an individual.

It is an acceptance of all the good parts of ourselves and the areas that need improvement. It's about who we are and what we do daily in each moment.

It takes courage to look at yourself deeply and honestly assess your being.

(Harris, Lori. Self-Awareness Is Key to Leadership Excellence, 2020).



Workforce Capability Framework and Reflective Practice toolkit

[CLICK HERE](#)



My experience in both frontline DFSV work and organisational management provided a strong foundation for my role on the board through the ability to balance strategic oversight with understanding the practical realities of the organisation's day-to-day operations. Despite this significant and transferable experience, undertaking a position on the board was daunting, and it took some time for me to practically apply my skills to the role.

Hannah

SHOWING UP – BELIEFS, VALUES AND SKILLS

Beliefs and values

Our beliefs are shaped by our experiences, relationships and what we have been exposed to. The way we understand the world, and especially our understanding of the nature of gendered violence, impacts the decisions we make in both our personal and professional lives.

Core beliefs are the deeply held assumptions or convictions that guide our attitudes, decisions and behaviours. They are the fundamental opinions that we hold about ourselves, others, and the world around us. Core beliefs are often absolutist and are not fact-checked.

Values are what we consider important and meaningful in our lives. They serve as a guiding compass, directing our choices, behaviours, and priorities. Our values form the foundation of our core beliefs about what constitutes a well-lived life. They provide us with a sense of direction and self-identity.

Living and working in ways that align with our values is conducive to our wellbeing – we are more likely to experience a sense of authenticity and fulfillment. Consistently practicing our values shapes who we are. It models the behaviour we want to present to ourselves and the world.

When we are clear about our values and how they align with the organisation we choose to be involved with, we make informed decisions that are useful and relevant to the purpose of the organisation while remaining 'true' to ourselves.

Values are not just abstract concepts, they shape our lives, influence our choices, and contribute to our overall wellbeing and fulfillment.

Feminist values encompass a set of principles and beliefs that advocate for gender equality and challenge traditional norms and power structures. These values emphasise the importance of recognising and addressing systemic inequalities faced by women, girls and marginalised genders.

There are a lot of myths about feminism, such as feminism is not useful or inclusive of men and it aims to take away men's rights. This is not the case. Feminist values focus on co-creating a global society where there is equality and equity for all people irrespective of sex, gender, sexuality, race, ability, belief, etc.

Feminist values focus on social justice, advocating for a fair and just society for all, while challenging the rigid gender roles and stereotypes that keep us all disadvantaged in various and diverse ways.



Jot down your thoughts

What have I been taught about relationships and families?

What messages have I been taught about gender?

What beliefs do I hold about relationships, families, and gender and how might these beliefs influence my agenda and decision-making on a board?

curiosity truth responsibility Pro-choice
 fairness freedom nature caring gender justice initiative
 housework is a political issue The personal is political
 contribution power wholeheartedness independence dignity
 Accountable behaviour
 Gender equality and equity
 actively stand against any form of oppression
 self-discipline grace honesty learning
 belonging kindness reliability trust accountability health excellence
 love creativity teamwork wellbeing wisdom
 Respectful feedback justice recognition uniqueness
 accountable collaboration cooperation
 vulnerability Self-awareness self-care and care for others
 commitment traditional equality vulnerability simplicity
 family serenity leadership Sharing power altruism
 work to eradicate systemic power imbalances and inequalities
 risk taker connection generosity success risk taker
 integrity eliminating gendered violence co-creating
 openness growth Compassion and empathy intuition
 connection intersectional analysis applied to practice safety humour
 kindness balance fairness compassion
 cooperation comparable worth
 ethics self-discipline
 inclusion equity
 responsible and transparent use of power
 Influence respect harmony order
 Women are not responsible for their oppression
 community competence service diversity inclusion
 optimism Women are the experts of our own lives
 wellbeing adaptability gratitude



IDENTIFY YOUR OWN VALUES

From the word clouds on page 11, identify 10 values that align with your values.

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

Of those 10, identify the five that resonate the most with who you are?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Now, what are the top three?

1.
2.
3.



Jot down your thoughts

How are these three core values important to me in my governance role?

.....

What do these three core values mean for how I make decisions in this role?

.....

How might these three core values show up in my role on the board?

Case Study



You are the Chairperson on the board of a gender-based violence organisation. The organisation's focus is on managing risk and improving safety for women while holding perpetrators to account. At the last AGM, a retired male frontline responder was voted to join the board.

The CEO regularly provides the board with a report including key information about service delivery. The report outlines systemic challenges that women are facing as they manage trauma and navigate a range of services. It also describes instances of limited or discriminatory support women experienced from frontline responders and the challenges frontline staff experience when advocating with them.

You have noticed that when these issues are raised to the board to provide information and discuss how the organisation might be able to back clients and staff strategically, this board member becomes defensive. He appears to take this information personally and spends a lot of time and space defending frontline responders rather than listening and working with the group at a strategic level. At times, his comments communicate a belief that he blames women for the poor responses.

The board member also raises questions about operational matters and provides advice on

how women should interact with frontline responders. Other board members, all of whom are women, struggle to get a word in when this happens.

How might you approach this issue with consideration of the following:

- > Power dynamics and privilege in the group
- > Conflict of interest
- > Delineating what is operational management and what is strategic board-level governance
- > Defining the purpose of this information being brought to the board and shifting back to that purpose
- > Confidentiality of clients
- > Respect and care for each other as well as the clients, the staff team and CEO
- > The original purpose, or identified value of a former frontline responder's contribution to the board.

SHOWING UP – BELIEFS, VALUES AND SKILLS

Skills

The board is a group of people working together to govern the gendered violence service. The right mix of skills, knowledge, and representation on the board will ensure it can fulfill its role effectively. The skills and experience of board members must be documented and reviewed regularly so that gaps are identified, and succession plans are put in place for any upcoming changes.

Skills-based boards collectively have the skills, knowledge, and experience to effectively govern and direct the organisation. This blend helps the organisation achieve its strategic goals, enhance its performance, manage risks and ensure accountability.

A skills-based board aims to have a balance of appropriately identified skills and experiences, with regard to the nature of the business and affairs of the organisation. Some of the common skills and experiences that a skills-based board may look for are:

- > Governance
- > Risk and compliance
- > Finance and accounting
- > Audit
- > Creativity and innovation
- > Technology and technology transfer
- > Service promotion, marketing, and communication
- > Industry knowledge, including practical service delivery experience in the sector
- > Policy and administration experience.

Representative boards are elected or appointed based on their affiliation with a certain group or stakeholders. For example, lived experience or lived experience of a family member.

A representative board can provide a transparent and visible connection to clients and broader community interests. It can ensure that the board is accountable to the organisation's clients through the representative directors themselves.



A mix of skills and representation on the board ensures an inclusive and comprehensive approach to governance.

TIP



Dot down your thoughts

What skills and experience do I bring to the board?

.....

Are there any gaps in my knowledge or skills that I need to develop?

.....

What do I understand about the skills and representative mix of our board?

STRATEGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

A successful organisation has a clear purpose, mission, and vision, as well as a well-defined and communicated strategy to achieve these over the long term. These are supported by values and beliefs that shape the organisational culture and guide decision-making, behaviours, and actions.

The purpose of a gendered violence service might be, for example, to:

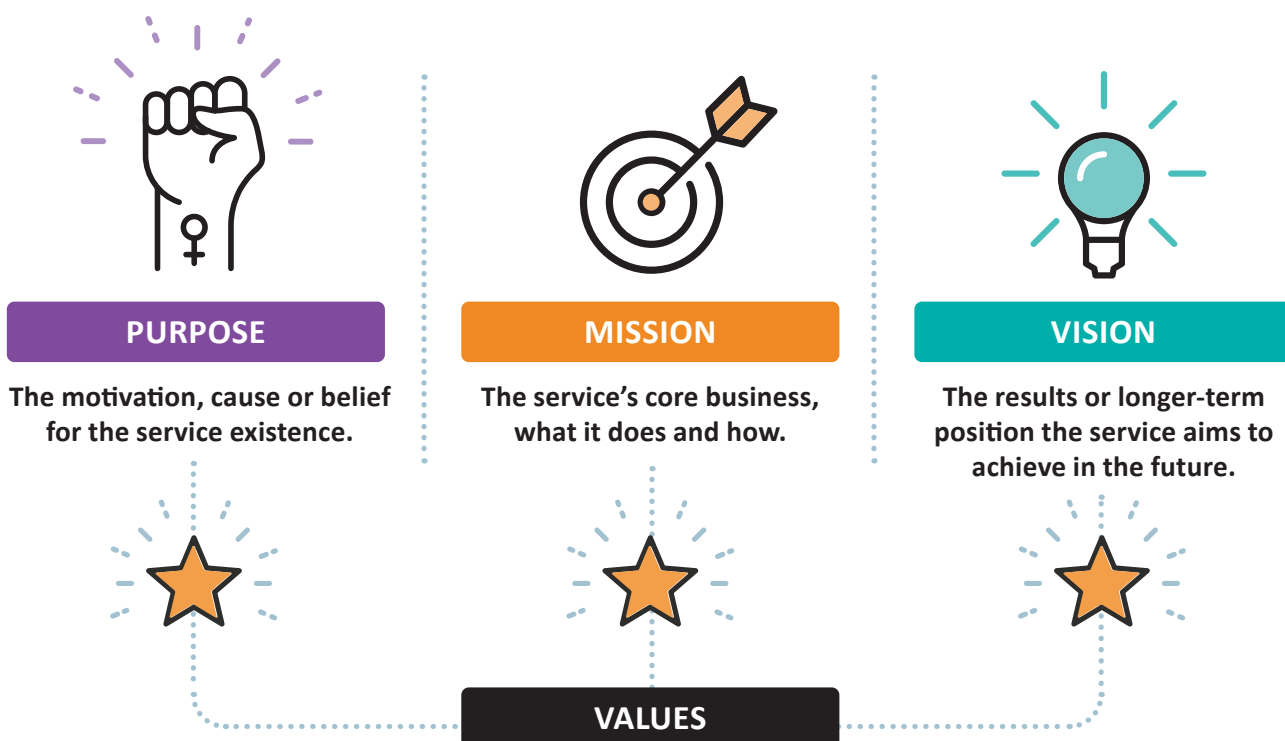
- > Enhance women's safety
- > Educate and empower women
- > Eliminate sexual violence
- > Heal victim-survivors of family violence
- > Promote health equity
- > Prevent violence.

The board and organisation share a common understanding and commitment to the purpose of the organisation and work in solidarity to achieve its mission and vision. In doing so they each have specific roles and responsibilities.



The board may have a diversity of views and robust conversations, but everyone works together to centralise the cause of victim-survivor rights and safety.

TIP



The beliefs that shape organisational culture and guide decision-making, behaviours and actions.

STRATEGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The board of a gendered violence service plays a crucial role in the development and approval of the strategic plans and makes decisions that contribute to and further the purpose, vision and mission of the organisation.



It is important for board members to be aware of:

- *The legal structure of the organisation*
- *How to access the organisation's constitution*
- *The objectives of the organisation as stated in the constitution.*

TIP

As board members, we understand that the board connects to the organisation's purpose when we:

- > Co-design strategic plans to achieve the organisation's purpose, vision and mission
- > Understand and operate within the purpose and scope of the organisation
- > Bring a gendered analysis to our decision-making
- > Keep our focus on purpose and strategy and out of operational matters
- > Understand, value, and support the workforce in decision-making and strategy implementation.



Jot down your thoughts

How do I contribute to furthering the cause of the organisation?

.....

Have I been tempted to step into operational matters?

.....

How do I ensure I am not stepping into operational management processes?

Governing a Victim-Survivor Centred Organisation

As board members of gendered violence services, we oversee services that work from a client-centred framework.

This is a continual process of reflection and learning, and application of a gendered analysis to board decision-making and strategy.

Critical to this practice is strong connection to the CEO and purpose of the organisation, as well as an understanding of how a victim-survivor-centred service operates.

A victim-survivor-centred service will focus on the client's strengths, resilience, needs, and the impacts of what has happened to them.



It's important to have a board that is reflective of the strategic intent of the organisation. What are we trying to achieve? What skills and backgrounds do we need to do this?

Melissa



STRATEGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Here are some examples of intersectional feminist governance practice and governance:

A victim-survivor-centred service will:	Intersectional feminist governance examples:
Have a focus on managing victim-survivor risk and increasing their safety	Centre victim-survivor risk in strategic decision-making
See things from the victim-survivor point of view, validate their experiences and never place pressure or blame on them	Represent victim-survivors on the board Use a careful and considered response to victim-survivor feedback
Actively involve the victim-survivor, when possible, in program development and service provision	Ask questions about proposals/board reports – how did victim-survivors contribute, what could be the consequences for victim-survivors?
Ensure systems and processes are in place to minimise the need for victim-survivors to retell their story	Budget for appropriate software/resources Encourage/support integrated service delivery
Respond to meet individual risk levels and patterns of coercive control by perpetrators	Budget to ensure staff have the skills and resources required
Work collaboratively with the victim-survivor and the perpetrator if your organisation provides services to him	Maintain focus on the safety of victim-survivors in strategic decision-making
Be trauma-informed, have a gendered analysis, and be confident in assessing who is the predominant aggressor and who is most in need of protection	Be aware of values and beliefs and how they may impact board contributions
Not collude with the perpetrator's use of violence or coercive control or put the victim-survivor at further risk through service provision	Ensure programs and structures do not replicate coercive control experienced by victim-survivors
Treat children as individuals and acknowledge the impact of the violence and the strength they bring to the family in developmentally appropriate ways	Ensure children are considered in budgets for new programs
Recognise community strengths and resilience when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Encourage representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the board
Inform clients about the organisation's feedback and complaints processes to ensure they have an opportunity to provide input into service delivery and design	Consider client feedback in planning and decision-making
Support staff development, wellbeing and sustainability through training, supervision and support to debrief	Prioritise wellbeing in budgets and tenders for existing and new programs
Advocate for ending gendered violence.	Advocate for ending gendered violence.

Case Study



Your board has identified a lack of representation of a woman with lived experience of gender-based violence, and so recruited specifically to fill this gap on the board. The woman your board selects is well known in the community and is open about her lived experiences.

You have noticed that the woman is a strong advocate for ensuring that the focus of service delivery stays on managing risk and centering victim-survivors in the work.

You also observe that your Chairperson, who is a retired ex-government employee, is focussed on compliance, outputs, and outcomes, and can come across as dismissive of this woman's expertise.

The Chairperson can be dominating in meetings, and you feel hesitant to raise this growing ethical issue that needs to be addressed.

How might you approach this issue with consideration of the following:

- > Approaching this respectfully and clearly with the Chairperson
- > Supporting the board member with lived experience when she is not being heard or valued and encouraging other board members to do the same
- > Incorporating ongoing consideration of unequal power dynamics on the board
- > Guiding internal policies and procedures as well as the constitution
- > Recalling the original purpose, or identified value of including a person with lived expertise as a board member
- > Considering the stated or explicit values of the board and the organisation.

GENDER EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRAUMA AWARENESS



We refer to the domestic, family, and sexual violence sector as the gendered violence sector because we acknowledge and understand that this form of violence, abuse, and control is informed by our social and cultural beliefs about gender.

The DFV Practice Principles, Standards and Guidance as well as the Regulatory Framework highlight the importance of services having a gender analysis. It is critical that a board of a gendered violence service understands what this means and ensures it is incorporated at a strategic level.

Gender remains the most substantial variable when considering differences in patterns of victimisation and perpetration. (Cox 2015)

Learn more about community attitudes towards violence against women.

[CLICK HERE](#)



GENDER EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRAUMA AWARENESS

Gender equity

Gender equality is a Human Right. Queensland is one of only three states and territories that have their own Human Rights legislation. The other two are Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

Please check out the video from the Women' and Girls Emergency Centre -

What are the Impacts of Gender Based Violence to find out more using the link or the QR code below.



Gendered violence and human rights	Tactics by perpetrators that breach these human rights
Right to live (section 16)	Taking a life through the violence
Protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (Section 17)	Torturing or punishing the victim in cruel and humiliating ways
Freedom of movement (Section 19)	Not allowing the victim to move freely or choose where they live through intimidation
Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (section 20)	Making the victim doubt their own thoughts or denying their right to practice their religion or beliefs
Freedom of expression (section 21)	Denying the victim the right to express their own opinion or ideas through belittling these or the threat of consequence if voicing them.

Queensland Human Rights Act, 2019

GENDER EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRAUMA AWARENESS



What is gender analysis?

When we employ a **gender analysis**, we understand that domestic, family and sexual violence is gendered in nature.

A gender analysis distinguishes between the terms “sex” (biological distinctions) and “gender” (the different roles, attributes and conduct that society deems socially appropriate for men, women, transgender people, and non-binary people).

It refers to the relative status and position of people, and the greater disadvantage experienced in most societies by women and people not conforming to or identifying with their society’s gender norms. It considers the interaction between gender and the other social categories such as class, race and ethnicity; and holds that as gender inequities are socially conditioned, they can be changed at an individual and societal level in the direction of justice, equity, and partnership between genders.

Gendered violence happens in all societies, across all social classes, as mentioned in all relationships, with women particularly at risk from men they know.

It is important to note too that gendered violence occurs in both public and private spheres. It occurs in the family behind closed doors and out in the general community. It may also be perpetuated by the state through policies or actions of institutions such as the police, military or immigration authorities.

What is gender?

Gender refers to one’s concept of their own gender. A person may identify as being male, female, neither, or both. Gender, and gender identity exist on a spectrum. Gender is a distinct identity from biological sex. Typically speaking, sex is assigned at birth by a medical professional based on gender markers. Gender identity may differ from biological sex and can’t be seen by others.

The term ‘gender inclusive’ refers to policies, language, and other societal frameworks that respect and acknowledge all gender identities.

This definition acknowledges the diversity and fluidity of gender identities and experiences and highlights the importance of inclusivity and respect for all individuals.

Applying a gendered analysis to our strategic planning and decision-making means we acknowledge and examine:

- > How different gender expressions result in different experiences across lifetimes
- > That gender inequity and inequality is socially conditioned
- > That gendered violence is violence sanctioned by our beliefs about gender
- > That most cultures, traditional beliefs, norms and social institutions legitimise and therefore perpetuate violence against women and gender diverse people
- > That people along the gender spectrum are impacted by DFV/SV in different ways and are also impacted by strong socially conditioned beliefs and work to bring awareness to the underlying causes of these inequities
- > Our role in creating positive change for people of all genders.

(Pytlik, 2023)

Case Study



You are a board member of a regional DFV service that supports women, children, and young people. The board has recently recruited a male board member.

The man is working in a not-for-profit in the mental health sector and considers himself to have a good understanding of domestic violence. He appears passionate about the work and has disclosed that he grew up with violence in the home.

You have noticed his internal tension with the focus on men as the perpetrators of violence. He wants people on the board to understand that not all men are bad. This board member has driven a push to acknowledge that men can be victim-survivors too. He regularly mentions this in meetings and has added to the next agenda the possibility of opening the service up to adult men who identify as victim-survivors.



An effective board will hold themselves and each other accountable for acting consistently with feminist governance principles.

Louise



How would you approach this matter with consideration of the following:

- > Supporting board members' understanding of gendered violence
- > Role expectations about personal agendas, service values and purpose
- > The potential unintended consequences of opening the service to adult male victim-survivors, including:
 1. For existing service users and other key stakeholders
 2. Operationally, and strategically
- > Board actions if members are unable to incorporate a gendered analysis into their decision-making
- > The original purpose or value of including a male as a board member of this service.



You are the Board Chair of a women's wellbeing service. The CEO presents to the Board the findings of a recent service evaluation.

The CEO reported that some LGBTQIA+ individuals have expressed that they do not feel safe accessing the service. The CEO acknowledged that their longstanding focus on women's wellbeing may need to evolve to ensure inclusive and culturally safe support for all people who identify as women, including trans women and gender-diverse individuals.

In presenting these findings, the CEO sought the board's support and leadership to guide the organisational shift required to improve cultural safety and inclusion. The board responded constructively, recognising the feedback as a catalyst for positive change. One board member reflected on what helps her feel safe in unfamiliar settings, another raised questions about whether LGBTQIA+ communities might prefer other services—highlighting the need for further education and discussion.

How would you approach this matter with consideration of the following:

- > Board members' understanding of diverse gender identities
- > Assumptions in governance practices that may unintentionally exclude
- > Barriers or enablers created by current governance structures, policies, and strategic priorities
- > The boards' role in leading cultural change
- > Key stakeholder relationships and gaps.

GENDER EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRAUMA AWARENESS

Gender analysis in board decision-making

In the context of governance, applying a gender analysis means that the board actively considers how its decisions may impact people of different genders — recognising that these impacts are not always equal. It involves embedding principles of gender equity and inclusion into the organisation's strategic direction, policy oversight, and risk management.

A gender-informed board ensures its governance practices actively promote fairness and work to address systemic barriers in practical and measurable ways.

This can involve asking reflective questions such as:

- > Who is affected by this decision, policy, or strategy — and in what ways?
- > Whose voices, experiences, or data are included in this process — and who might be missing?
- > Do people of different genders experience unique barriers, risks, or benefits as a result?
- > Are we making assumptions about gender that need to be examined?

Gender analysis examples

Application of a gender analysis in consideration of opening a **regional DFV service that serves women, young people, and children to adult male victim-survivors** may include asking:

- > How does expanding our service to include adult male victim-survivors align with our stated organisational purpose, values, and strategic priorities?
- > How would we ensure our workforce is adequately supported, skilled, and equipped—both professionally and personally—to undertake this work safely and effectively?
- > What are the governance and ethical implications of altering our service model to include men? How does this affect our accountability to current service users, stakeholders, and funders?
- > Does the board have sufficient evidence and understanding to assess whether male victim-survivors require different support approaches, and whether we are the most appropriate or best-placed organisation to meet those needs?
- > Could introducing services for men unintentionally reinforce false equivalences between male and female experiences of violence, or undermine the gendered understanding of domestic and family violence that underpins our model?
- > What are the strategic and reputational risks of changing our client cohort? How might this impact perceptions of safety, trust, and accessibility for women and children currently using our services?
- > Do we have governance oversight of the frameworks and risk assessments in place to distinguish between victim-survivors and perpetrators, particularly in complex presentations? What are the potential unintended consequences if these are inadequate?
- > What are the potential impacts of serving male victim-survivors on the existing workforce culture, staff wellbeing, and retention, particularly for staff with lived experience of gender-based violence, and how would we mitigate these risks?
- > What else?

GENDER EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRAUMA AWARENESS

Gender analysis examples continued

Application of a gender analysis in consideration of the **inclusivity of gender diverse people** in a women's wellbeing service may include asking:

- > How well do our governance frameworks, strategic priorities, and policies reflect contemporary understandings of gender diversity — particularly for those who identify as women, including trans and gender-diverse people?
- > What is the board's role in ensuring that the organisation is culturally safe, inclusive, and accessible for all women, including trans women and gender-diverse people who align with our service's purpose?
- > How does the board monitor and evaluate whether organisational practices (eg, communication, client pathways, staffing, partnerships) support inclusion and do not unintentionally exclude or marginalise gender-diverse people?
- > Do our current risk management and accountability mechanisms consider the reputational, cultural, and service delivery risks associated with exclusion or harm toward LGBTQIA+ people?
- > Are there lived experiences or voices missing from our strategic discussions or decision-making processes? Who do we need to engage with to inform inclusive governance?
- > What do we know about the organisational readiness to work with gender diverse people? How might we uncover and address any biases or exclusionary attitudes that may cause harm?
- > What else?

To govern a gendered violence service, board members must show up with authenticity and curiosity – this means being genuinely committed to understanding and addressing the complex issues of gendered violence.

Anonymous



Not down your thoughts

In this section, what was I surprised or challenged by and why?

.....

What have I learned about gender in this section?

.....

What am I curious about?



Case Study



You are on the board of a women's shelter where a recent incident has left staff feeling intimidated by a victim-survivor. Another service provider reported the incident to the Minister and it has now been referred to your board as a severe complaint.

The incident concerned an 18-year-old woman who had recently arrived at the shelter from a remote Aboriginal community with her two-year-old daughter and six-month-old son. The family was brought directly to the shelter by police. According to the incident report, the woman did not speak English well and seemed anxious when she arrived. She was talking to herself and appeared agitated.

According to the report, staff tried to complete an intake with her, but she could not understand them and began yelling, pacing and banging on the reception desk. The staff felt threatened and called the police back to the service. Police arrived and took the woman and her two children to the watch house.

They contacted a local Aboriginal health service for support and that service filed a complaint with the Minister about the shelter's response.

How would you manage the incident review considering the following:

- > Leadership of the investigation
- > Steps to be taken according to the incident review policy and procedures
- > The intersections of disadvantage and oppression that the women may be experiencing
- > Responsibility for providing culturally and physically safe environments for clients and staff
- > Access and support for people with English as a second or third language
- > Staff understanding and responses to complex mental health and trauma
- > Power and privilege differences between the organisation, staff and women seeking support
- > Consequences for the woman, your staff, and relationship with the Aboriginal health service.



IDENTIFYING PRIVILEGE

From the list below, tick whether you belong to the privileged group, or the non-privileged group in the community, society, or country you live in. It is not a sin to hold privilege and we don't control what privilege we hold. This activity is about increasing self-awareness.

Identity marker	Privileged group	Non-privileged group
Race	☐	☐
Ethnicity	☐	☐
Class	☐	☐
Gender	☐	☐
Sexual orientation	☐	☐
Ability	☐	☐
Religion	☐	☐
Education	☐	☐
Marital status	☐	☐
Citizenship	☐	☐
Language	☐	☐
Age	☐	☐
Employment	☐	☐
Geography	☐	☐
Appearance	☐	☐
Wealth	☐	☐
War/conflict free living	☐	☐
Owning own home	☐	☐
Health	☐	☐



Diverse perspectives foster creativity, innovation, and cultural safety – workforce diversity is good not only for the workforce itself, but for the broader organisation, its external relationships and the community it serves.

TIP



Jot down your thoughts

How do I describe the privilege and power that I bring to my board role?

.....

What could help our board to bring an intersectional lens to our work?

.....

How do I bring an intersectional approach to my strategic decision-making?

GENDER EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRAUMA AWARENESS

How a trauma-informed service works

Gendered violence services work with people who are impacted by complex trauma. This means it is critical for board members to be clear about what our organisation offers and how services are provided so that they don't trigger further trauma.

In being trauma-aware, we should try to:

- > Understand the people we support are impacted by complex trauma
- > Understand the people we support may act or behave in ways that are directly related to the complex trauma they have been impacted by
- > Understand the people who work in our organisation and on the board may also experience trauma and exhibit the symptoms of trauma
- > View symptoms as expectable and adaptive responses to severe trauma
- > Apply a strengths-based approach to work with the existing resources that clients have
- > Remain clear about what we offer and how to avoid re-traumatising clients
- > Ensure all staff are trauma-aware and trauma-responsive. We invest in in-depth training in understanding and responding to trauma which may include de-escalating deregulated behaviour
- > Understand our legislated responsibilities – e.g. psychosocial hazards legislation.



(Blue Knot Foundation, 2017)



Governing a trauma-informed gendered violence service means:

- *Making decisions and developing strategies that do no harm, and;*
- *Ensuring staff are resourced, well supported and skilled to do the work.*

TIP



Boards must operate with a gendered and cultural lens. The community looks to see cultural understanding and a decolonised way of functioning whether the service is community controlled or not. First Nation people will use the service and expect to be provided with inclusive and culturally safe support.

Anonymous



GENDER EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRAUMA AWARENESS



Being trauma-informed from a governance perspective means:

Principle	The board will:
Safety	Ensure that all premises and support provided to clients, stakeholders and staff are physically, emotionally, and culturally safe. <i>This is an ongoing and involved process that requires self-auditing and reflection.</i>
Trustworthiness	Ensure that all services the organisation promises to provide are consistent, followed through on, and of ethical and professional quality. <i>For example, the board supports internal systems that minimise the re-traumatisation of clients as much as possible – such as easy-to-use, secure and thorough client databases that ensure client information is available to the appropriate staff.</i>
Collaboration	Ensure that all support provided is strengths-based, acknowledging that the client is the expert of their own experience and that staff focuses on a practice of ‘doing with’ rather than ‘doing to or for’. <i>For example, the board endorses processes for co-creation and service improvement.</i>
Choice	Ensure that options and choice are a core aspect of the work with victim-survivors of gender-based violence. <i>For example, the board ensures programs or service delivery do not replicate the coercion and control that victim-survivors experience.</i>
Empowerment	Support internal service delivery systems that focus on empowering victim-survivors and holding perpetrators of gender-based violence to account. <i>For example, the board examines the power and privilege they hold and how that might inform judgments about victim-survivors, program or strategy developments.</i>

GENDER EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRAUMA AWARENESS

Lived experience and governance

Lived experience of domestic, family and/or sexual violence is a reality for many working in the gendered violence sector.

‘Lived experience’ means the direct impact that social justice issues, or a combination of issues such as gendered violence, have on individuals.

‘Lived expertise’ describes the knowledge, insights, understanding, and wisdom that people gain throughout their own lives.

(Sandhu, 2017).

There are at least three distinct ways lived experience and expertise can be integrated into gendered violence services. All people bring valuable and diverse perspectives and knowledge, and we should honour the crucial role of women with lived experience in establishing the first refuges and support services for women and children.

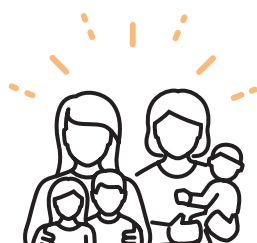


THE WORKFORCE

The workforce includes allied workers, practitioners, leaders and us as board members.

Women with lived experience were crucial in establishing the first Australian and international refuges and support services. As the sector has professionalised, lived experience has become less visible and can even have taboo or judgement attached to it.

Lived experience in the workforce should be acknowledged and appreciated for the significant value it brings, however it is not essential to working in the sector.



SERVICE USERS

The knowledge and experiences of clients is crucial in ongoing quality improvement of service delivery. Their feedback and involvement in service reflection and improvement processes is critical.

Specialist gendered violence services are accountable to the clients they support, and client knowledge should form the basis of a collective understanding of diverse experiences and journeys within the system.



SURVIVORS & ADVOCATES

Survivors and advocates who use their lived experience to influence policy development, service planning, practice, and contribute to broader systems reform, social change, and community awareness.

Involvement of survivor advocates in projects can have a profound and invaluable impact. Their contributions help identify systemic gaps and drive service improvements.

No single one of these ways can fully represent the entirety of lived experience and none is more valuable than another. There are multiple ways in which the lived experiences and expertise of victim-survivors can be incorporated to inform and inspire the work of the whole sector.

Adapted from Wark et.al. (2022)

GENDER EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND TRAUMA AWARENESS

Responding to disclosures

Acknowledging the lived experience of gendered violence in our work, we will inevitably have conversations about it and it's important to know how to respond sensitively and appropriately if a disclosure is made. This could occur in a range of personal and professional settings, including in a board meeting.

A disclosure is when someone tells an individual or group about their experience, for example, about domestic, family or sexual violence which may be recent or historical.

Firstly, it's important to ensure we are aware of internal policies and procedures about responding to disclosures and what support is provided by the organisation. This information may be provided in board induction.

Try to remember these three key points when responding to disclosures:

- > Listen, without interruption or judgment
- > Believe and validate experiences
- > Provide information that will support.

1800Respect provides detailed information about how to respond sensitively to disclosures. It is a useful referral point not only for the person making a disclosure but also for people making referrals who would like more information or to debrief following a disclosure.



Develop a board commitment/guideline that outlines specifically how you support each other if you have lived experiences as well as how your commitment to supporting workers in the organisation to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

TIP



People applying to be on board of gendered violence services may have experienced abuse or violence in their family of origin or relationships.

A safe, respectful and appropriate opportunity to discuss this should be built into the recruitment process. Board members may be exposed to information and stories and that could touch nerves they have no control over. Intentional and overt care is required to ensure sustainability of board members.

Rosie



Jot down your thoughts

What inspired me to get involved in the gendered violence sector?

.....

What life experiences have accompanied me to this work as a board member?

.....

How might my life experiences impact how I engage with others on the board?



It can take a lot of courage to disclose an experience of domestic, family, or sexual violence.

TIP



1800Respect

CLICK HERE

Connection to Purpose



Key Take Aways

- > Knowing ourselves and understanding our motives enable us to make effective and ethical decisions
- > An appropriate skill and representation mix is important for effective and ethical governance
- > Understanding and connecting to the purpose of the work enable us to make appropriate and effective strategic decisions
- > We are responsible for employing a gendered analysis in our leadership and supporting the workgroup to have an intersectional and trauma-informed practice framework and skills base
- > Managing victim-survivor risk at all levels and in all programs is core to gendered violence services alongside advocating for systemic change
- > We are responsible for holding ourselves and each other as a board accountable as well as the organisation
- > Working in the gendered violence sector can be confronting and triggering. Looking after ourselves and each other is critical.



We work in solidarity to further the cause of ending gendered violence

TIP

Group Activity and Reflection



Create a safe meeting guide to establish a basis for dealing with psychological, physical and cultural safety based on trauma-informed principles.

Engage a facilitator:

- > Set a collective intention for what we hope to achieve
- > Brief the facilitator on the process and desired outcome – co-create a process to develop a safe meeting guide and commitment to the process
- > Arrange a time and find a space that fosters coming together and the ability to get into an important and potentially challenging conversation about what meeting safety looks like
- > Provide feedback and ratify the meeting guide once approved
- > Make sure the guide is clear about what to do when it isn't followed.

Chairperson facilitator:

- > Host a conversation about the key things we need to have in place to make sure everyone has a voice and is listened to – (i.e. respect, honesty, listening, not interrupting, no side talk outside of meetings, adhering to the code of conduct, taking turns, etc)
- > How will we manage when we don't follow the communication commitment?
- > How will we celebrate when we are communicating in solidarity?
- > How often should we review our commitment?

The Workforce Capability Framework

CLICK HERE



Reflective Questions

- > Are we clear about the purpose of the organisation? What it does, who it serves how it will achieve its mission?
- > Are we clear about the purpose of the board and our roles?
- > How are we continuously checking ourselves as a board to make sure the work we do is useful to the clients, workforce and organisation?
- > What processes do we have in place to ensure we regularly connect with the organisation's purpose, mission and vision?
- > Is anything getting in the way of our focus on strategy and sustainability?
- > How do we ensure we bring a gender analysis to our decision-making and strategy development?
- > Do we have the right mix of skills and representation on our board?
How do we track this information and make it visible?
- > Are we clear about our role in contributing to a trauma-informed service?
- > How do we know we operating effectively as a board?



Hannah - Board Story

I joined a board because I am passionate about supporting those affected by gender-based violence and working towards a society in which it is eradicated.

Non-profits, especially those addressing gendered violence, play a crucial role in both supporting survivors and driving social change. Volunteering as a board member allows me to contribute meaningfully to these issues, leveraging my skills while recognising the importance of effective governance in non-profit success.

The board's makeup of various professionals and its commitment to inclusion created an environment where questions were always welcome and thoroughly explained. This supportive atmosphere helped me to grow my knowledge and contribute effectively to the board's work.

I found it challenging and rewarding to navigate diverse perspectives within the board, aiming to achieve consensus while respecting differing viewpoints. While a group of people can have shared values and shared goals, there will always be a diversity of lived experience, ideas, and approaches which take time and dedication to navigate. This experience has deepened my appreciation for collaborative decision-making and the importance of clear, consistent communication.

Having worked in the DFSV sector, I was fortunate to have engaged with the organisation through coordinated client support before joining the board. I admired and respected their approach to innovation, education, social justice, and systemic change, and felt a strong connection to the purpose and work of the organisation. I saw joining the board as an opportunity to deepen connection to, and support, an organisation that provides invaluable assistance to marginalised members of the community.

The board was made up of individuals with diverse backgrounds and professional experience, therefore board members brought an array of practical knowledge and varying perspectives to our discussions. The different professional backgrounds and skill sets of our board members enabled us to leverage everyone's strengths when assigning tasks, making decisions, or when we required particular expertise. This ability to draw on specific skills ensured that we could address challenges effectively and take advantage of the unique contributions of each board member.

Whilst the professional backgrounds and areas of expertise amongst board members varied, there was a high level of alignment in our values and ethics, which also proved beneficial. This strong alignment allowed us to reach consensus quickly and work efficiently toward the goals of the organisation with a clear strategic direction.

Board service is serious and at times, demanding, a reality that is frequently overlooked due to the fact that most nonprofit board members are considered "volunteers."

Serving on a board requires that members operate in accordance with financial requirements, legal requirements and statutory obligations in the relevant Acts and Regulations, the Constitution, Policies, and Strategic Plan, and manage the risks faced by the organisation.

.....

While the responsibility can be great, nonprofit board membership provides an opportunity to serve our community and to gain a sense of fulfillment.

.....



Board Capabilities and Effectiveness



'Governance is the systems and processes that direct, manage and guide an organisation'.

This includes implementing systems and processes that ensure the organisation operates effectively and within ethical, funding, and legal requirements.

(Governance Institute of Australia, n.d.)

Effective not-for-profit governance provides consistent oversight, accountability, and checks and balances to ensure the organisation reaches its mission and goals and remains sustainable for the long term.

In this section, we explore what this looks like for boards of gendered violence services.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE



In the next few pages of this toolkit, we will delve into the key strategies, practices and relationships required for effective governance of gendered violence services that are guided by feminist frameworks.

Effective governance will enable services to enhance performance, better fulfill their purpose, mission and vision, and more effectively serve their communities.

Here are some overarching principles for effective governance. In the roles and responsibilities section on pages 39 we explore practices that a board may find useful to implement in their work in the gendered violence sector.

- > Clear purpose, mission and vision
- > Board composition, recruitment, orientation, training and succession planning
- > Culture monitoring and improvement
- > Board meetings and committees
- > Financial oversight
- > Fundraising and resource development
- > Risk management
- > Stakeholder engagement
- > Ethical and legal compliance
- > Performance, reporting and evaluation
- > Benchmarking and continuous improvement.



Jot down your thoughts

What potential or perceived conflicts of interest could arise for me in my role on the board?

.....

How did my induction to the board equip me to perform my board duties?

.....

How reflective of the community is our board?

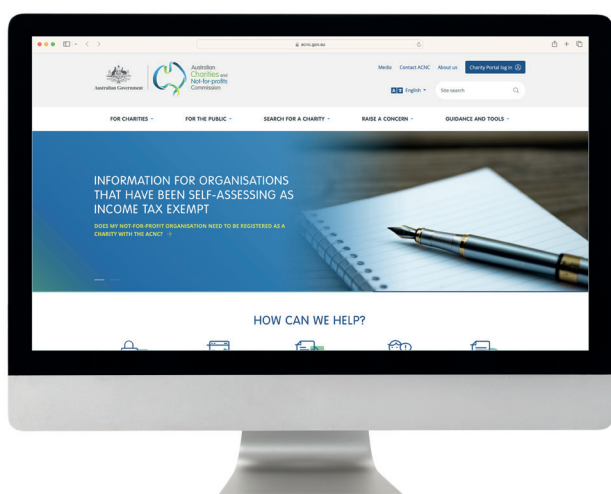
In addition to using this resource, we encourage board members to seek specialist governance training and have a look at other helpful resources to enable you to appropriately fulfill your obligations as a board member. Here are some useful materials and more are listed at the end of this workbook on pages 95.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance Standards

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Governance Standards are a set of core, minimum standards that deal with how a NFP is run (including its processes, activities and relationships). The set of high-level principles are not precise rules, so a charity may decide how to comply or best use them in their own ways.

The ACNC provides more information about the standards and an evaluation tool to support services to assess if they are meeting their obligations, and to help identify any gaps that prevent them from doing so.



Find out more
about ACNC

CLICK HERE



Governance Principles

The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), in consultation with the not-for-profit sector, has created a Framework of Governance Principles to help services understand and achieve high-quality governance.

Like the ACNC Standards, these principles are not prescriptive but can be applied to meet the unique needs of the service size, structure and purpose.

The AICD notes '*all organisations can achieve good governance*' and the principles provide a handy resource to help us do so.



AICD
Governance Principles

CLICK HERE



Stepping onto a board comes with responsibility. It is important to understand the personal implications if the organisation is mis-managed financially. It is the responsibility of all board members to check the financial management of the organisation.

TIP

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

What a board guided by a feminist framework does and doesn't do

The distinction between delegated operational management and strategic governance is crucial for the effective functioning of a gendered violence service. Decisions we make may have serious unintended consequences and place victim-survivors at risk. In this section, we will explore the important things we must do as an effective board operating in the best interests of the service. We will also examine those we should avoid, with an emphasis on maintaining this important distinction.

In summary, an effective board will focus on strategic governance, setting high-level policy, providing oversight, and ensuring the organisation's mission is upheld. And, it will avoid getting entangled in day-to-day operations which can hinder efficiency and undermine the organisation's leadership structure. Clear communication and respect for the roles and responsibilities of both the board and operational staff is critical.

A good board:

- > Sets the policy of the organisation
- > Makes decisions that align with the service purpose and mission
- > Has a Chairperson who directs and manages the CEO
- > Enhances the organisation's public standing
- > Appoints a Public Officer (ATO)
- > Evaluates its performance on an annual basis
- > Regularly reviews strategy to ensure alignment with purpose and mission of the organisation
- > Identifies the association
- > Manages financial affairs
- > Oversees risk management
- > Reports to members and funding bodies
- > Lodges required reports
- > Acts for the association
- > Follows the association rules
- > Sets high standards for board reporting, including their own preparation and questioning
- > Bears ultimate responsibility, even on tasks that have been delegated to others and including on voluntary boards
- > Maintains appropriate boundaries with staff as well as between operational and strategic matters
- > Acts always in the best interests of the service.

What else?

A good board doesn't:

- > Perform day-to-day management tasks
- > Communicate directly with staff unless there is a significant complaint about the CEO/Manager
- > Get involved in individual cases and client matters
- > Disclose confidential information
- > Bully or harass each other or staff
- > Engage in human resource matters except appointment and performance evaluation of the CEO
- > Make operational decisions
- > Operate outside the service purpose and strategy
- > Ignore financial oversight
- > Neglect strategic planning
- > Engage in favouritism or nepotism
- > Avoid accountability for the organisation's performance
- > Make major decisions in isolation from input from relevant stakeholders.

What else?



Jot down your thoughts

How do I ensure I hold myself accountable for operating within the boundaries of my role?

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Governance vs Management

Understanding the difference between our governance role as a board and the operational role of management can help to ensure we operate effectively and enable the organisation to do so.

The following list provides some examples of the responsibilities that the board has delegated to management.

- > Implement the decisions made by the board and ensure functionality day-to-day
- > Implement and drive the strategic plan including developing an operational plan and keeping the board members informed
- > Ensure proper management of financials, detailed records, prepare budget, prepare financial reports for board review
- > Implement policies and risk appetite; report to the board via risk register
- > Manage HR matters and anything else related to staff
- > Provide accessible, non-judgemental, critical support
- > Provide services based on identified client needs sought through consultation and feedback
- > Educate, advocate and challenge harmful gender bias and discrimination that cause gendered violence
- > Work collaboratively to manage gendered violence risk and provide the most appropriate and safe support to clients
- > Employ suitable workforce who are aware of duties and best practice and complies with them
- > Act honestly and in the best interest of the clients based on their feedback
- > Exercise care, skill and diligence in carrying out their roles
- > Provide services that are sound, accountable and responsive
- > Provide sound financial management of funded services.

What else?



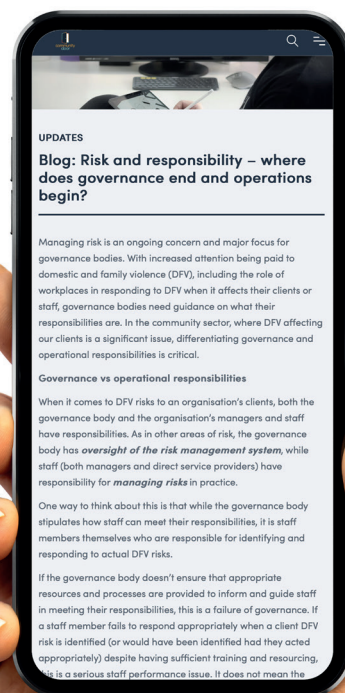
Not down your thoughts

Thinking about the list of management delegated responsibilities – are there times I have inadvertently stepped in?
What were the impacts?



Where does governance end and operations begin?

[CLICK HERE](#)



*Being a board member is a bit like being on a boat.
Be careful where you put your weight. Anonymous*





You recently stepped onto the board of a gender-based violence service as the Chairperson. You are semiretired and passionate about ending gender-based violence. You have managed a large for profit organisation and believe you contribute useful skills and experience. You have been trying to engage the CEO in some of the service delivery challenges she has mentioned including offering some great suggestions.

You have noticed she seems a bit annoyed when you interject during her verbal summary of her monthly report and feel confused. The CEO has a very different leadership style to yours but you feel your advice would help her. You are struggling to step back from trying to tell her what to do when she brings issues to the board.

At the last board meeting, she shared that she engaged a HR company to assist with a performance management process. You have tried to tell her that you think she is too soft with staff and a firmer approach is needed. The CEO shared she has been following the guidance of the HR company and also feels some important complexities such as the ongoing risk of burnout and vicarious trauma should be considered when managing staff in the gender-based violence sector. Your business-oriented background means you feel frustrated at what feels like a softly, softly approach.

How do you manage this considering the following:

- Value alignment/misalignment with the CEO
- How to approach a conversation with the CEO about your different ways of working
- Your contribution to a healthy and strong working relationship with the CEO
- How to check yourself when you feel the urge to step into the CEO role?
- Seeking feedback from the CEO and board and what do you do with it?
- Any other considerations to ensure you help rather than hinder the good work of the organisation
- Your approach to conflict.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Roles and responsibilities

An effective board is clear about their roles, relationships, and responsibilities.

Typically, boards are comprised of:



We have provided some general information about these roles and encourage you to use other specialist governance resources to find out more about your board role based on information that reflects the structure of the service. For example, services operating under the Association Incorporation Act may have different role requirements than services that operate under the Corporations Act.

Overall, a general board member's primary responsibility is to ensure the organisation's success in achieving its mission while upholding its values and maintaining legal and ethical standards.

Active engagement, commitment, and a passion for the organisation's cause are essential attributes for an effective board member of a gender-based violence service.

The roles and responsibilities of board members aligned with the high-level principles for effective governance include:

1. Clear purpose, vision and mission

- > Co-create a clear and compelling vision and mission for the organisation
- > Understand and commit to the organisation's purpose and values
- > Co-create, oversee and review the organisation's strategic plan including adapting to changing circumstances and opportunities
- > Ensure the organisation's values are clear and are regularly reviewed.



2. Board composition, recruitment, orientation, training and succession planning

- > Aim for a balanced mix of skills, including leadership, financial, legal, fundraising, content expertise and lived experience
- > Support the organisation in identifying and preparing future board leaders
- > Provide a comprehensive induction and ongoing training for new and existing board members (including this resource) to ensure the gendered violence context is understood
- > Consider term limits in board roles and regular rotation of board members to bring in fresh perspectives and enable the building of skills and experience
- > Ensure all members understand expectations of their roles, responsibilities, and legal obligations
- > Select a capable board Chair or President to provide positive leadership, direction and chairing of board meetings
- > Be open to leadership roles within the board, such as committee Chair or board officer.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

3. Culture

- > Define and model the desired organisational culture aligned with purpose, vision and mission
- > Work in solidarity by fostering a purpose-driven culture of collaboration and constructive dialogue
- > Maintain open, inclusive and transparent communication with all stakeholders
- > Co-create a culture that shares successes, challenges, and progress regularly
- > Ensure mechanisms are in place to support and measure organisational culture.



4. Board Meetings and Committees

- > Allocate sufficient time and resources to fulfill board duties effectively
- > Ensure agendas and materials for review are provided with adequate review time prior to the meeting
- > Hold regular and well-structured board meetings including centering the purpose of the organisation
- > Prepare for meetings by reviewing materials and agendas and completing tasks required prior to the meeting
- > Attend board meetings as scheduled, actively contribute to discussions and ask questions to ensure understanding
- > Vote on important organisational matters
- > Encourage active participation and engagement from all board members and establish clear consequences for no-shows or regular cancellations
- > Establish board sub-committees to focus on specific areas such as governance, finance, fundraising, and programs
- > Ensure sub-committees are productive and report back to the full board regularly. This can be done via a regular report template or a process that is decided upon by the board.



5. Financial Oversight

- > Review and approve the annual budget
- > Monitor the organisation's financial health and sustainability ensuring responsible financial management, including adherence to budgetary constraints
- > Establish a finance committee to oversee budgeting, financial reporting, and audit processes. Implement a monthly meeting between the finance manager of the organisation and Treasurer to review finance reports before the board meeting
- > Ensure transparency and accountability in financial management with clear reporting structures.

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

6. Fundraising and Resource Development

- > Support and participate in fundraising efforts including cultivating potential donors and funding opportunities
- > Work strategically to diversify funding sources and develop sustainable fundraising strategies.



7. Risk Management

- > Develop and maintain policies and procedures to ensure compliance with legal, auditing, funding, and ethical standards
- > Identify and mitigate potential risks that could impact the organisation – make risk management a standing agenda item for board meetings.



8. Stakeholder Engagement

- > Advocate for the organisation's interests at the local, regional, or national level, if applicable
- > Assist in public relations efforts to enhance the organisation's visibility and credibility
- > Foster positive relationships with the community, donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders by attending events and engaging with local and sectoral stakeholders, policy-makers and politicians
- > Participate in activities that support gender equality
- > Seek input and feedback from clients and the community to inform decision-making and program improvement and development.



9. Ethical and Legal Compliance and Program oversight

- > Understand the organisation's programs and services
- > Ensure the organisation operates within the boundaries of legal and regulatory obligations
- > Approve major policies, bylaws, and significant organisational decisions
- > Monitor program effectiveness and impact and provide input and guidance as required
- > Adhere to a code of ethics and/or a conflict of interest policy
- > Ensure the highest standards of ethical conduct within the organisation
- > Promote a positive culture that encourages and expects ethical behaviour and adherence to legal and duty of care requirements
- > Establish a code of ethics for board members ensuring there is a focus on aligned values and understanding of the complexity work in the gendered violence sector.



10. Performance and Evaluation

- > Participate in board self-assessment and evaluation processes
- > Seek opportunities for board and personal growth
- > Develop key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the organisation and the board's progress
- > Conduct regular evaluations of the board's performance as a whole and of individual members. For example, develop a performance appraisal process specially for the board use. This could include a 360 feedback process between board Chair and board members.



11. Continuous Improvement

- > Embrace a culture of continuous improvement and learning. This could include the provision of relevant client feedback to the board with recommended improvements
- > Be flexible and adapt board practices based on feedback, lessons learned and changing circumstances.



Adapted from

Australian Institute of Company Directors. (n.d.). Not-for-Profit Governance Principles. AICD. Retrieved from <https://www.aicd.com.au/tools-and-resources/not-for-profit-governance-principles.html>

Governance Institute of Australia. (n.d.). Good Governance Principles and Guidance for NFP Organisations. Governance Institute of Australia. Retrieved from <https://www.governanceinstitute.com.au/> (paid membership required)



Jot down your thoughts

What else from an intersectional feminist governance perspective?

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Additional responsibilities for particular roles might include:

President/Chairperson

- > Chairs the board meeting
- > Plays a key role in general meetings
- > Represents the organisation
- > Leads the board and the organisation
- > Takes initiative to resolve board-related issues
- > Provides line management supervision and support to the Manager/CEO.

Secretary

- > Maintains register of members
- > Manages correspondence including advice to President / Treasurer of matters arising
- > Takes nominations for the committee
- > Calls and convenes board and other meetings
- > Informs members about meetings (giving plenty of notice)
- > Arranges venue and logistics
- > Prepares agendas, gathering and presenting relevant documents
- > Takes and maintains minutes of meetings and provides to members
- > Maintains conflict of interest register
- > Provide reports to legislative bodies
- > Maintains register of critical documents such as those signed under Common Seal or the use of S127 requirements under the Corporations Act
- > Provides advice to the board on good governance
- > Arranges Annual General Meeting and ensures that all statutory obligations are met
- > Supports induction of new board members.

What the management committee does

CLICK HERE



Treasurer

- > Keeps and maintains an asset register
- > Manages the petty cash balance
- > Oversees the petty cash book, keeping it up to date
- > Documents all payments made, including receipts, invoices and statements
- > Maintains all deposit and cheque books
- > Keeps all financial records in Queensland
- > Keeps track of payments received by using either consecutively numbered receipts or electronic record keeping system.



Jot down your thoughts

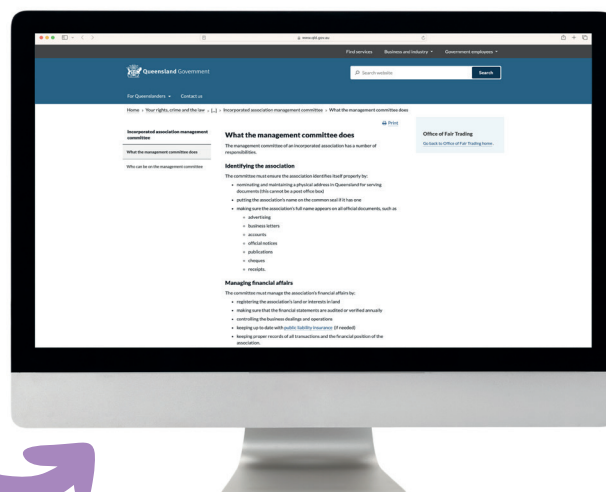
How clear am I about my role on the board? If I need more information, how will I access this?

.....

Do I have the time and commitment to fulfil the obligations of my role? How will I manage any constraints?

.....

Am I fulfilling the obligations of my role? Do I need any support or additional skills?



EFFECTIVE PROCESSES



Effective governance processes are crucial for the success and impact of a gendered violence service. It is important to consider as a board how to identify indicators for improvement and review how you are tracking against these indicators. This will help ensure the board can better fulfill its role in supporting the organisation's purpose, mission and vision.

Here are eight key considerations for the governing of a gendered violence service:

1. Know and understand the context of the work
2. Know, understand, and apply values, vision and mission of the organisation
3. Know, understand and use the policies, procedures, guidelines and code of conduct of the organisation
4. Know, understand and have oversight of reporting requirements for funding received
5. Know, understand and have oversight of legal and regulatory obligations of the organisation, such as complying with the relevant laws, reporting on the financial and operational performance, and ensuring accountability and transparency
6. Ensure that the organisation will pass audits and comply with funding requirements
7. Ensure that the organisation engages client cohorts in feedback processes and service improvements
8. Know and understand the risks and challenges that the organisation may face, such as funding constraints, security threats, staff turnover, or reputational damage, and how to mitigate and manage them.

The board must be aware of the various dimensions of risk identification, assessment and mitigation present in a victim-survivor organisation. These are critical to effective decision-making in regard to organisational operations and service delivery. Louise



What the board needs from the CEO

Board reports keep board members informed about what's happening, bringing emerging opportunities to our attention and making us aware of risks that need to be mitigated.

Ensuring the information received from management is informative and accurate is a key responsibility of board members.

Services will have a report structure that works for them and it's up to the board to ask if additional information is required, or something is not understood. Important information recommended for inclusion as recommended by The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) includes:

- > **Executive Summary:** A brief overview of the main points and highlights of the report, such as the achievements, challenges, financial performance, compliance, risk management, human resources, stakeholder engagement, and plans of the organisation
- > **Achievements and Challenges:** A report on the progress and outcomes of the organisation in relation to its vision, mission, values, and goals, and the evidence, examples, analysis, and recommendations of the impact and value of the organisation's work

- > **Financial Performance and Position:** A presentation of the financial statements of the organisation, such as the income, expenses, assets, liabilities, and cash flow, and the explanation, comparison, assessment, and audit or review of the financial health and sustainability of the organisation
- > **Compliance and Risk Management:** A report on the compliance and risk management issues that the organisation faced or addressed, such as meeting the ACNC obligations, reporting to other regulators, adhering to the relevant laws and standards, and managing the potential risks and opportunities.



Gatekeepers Theory' suggests that information provided to boards may be filtered, e.g., oversimplified or sugar-coated.

TIP

EFFECTIVE PROCESSES

- > **Compliance and Risk Management:** A report on the compliance and risk management issues that the organisation faced or addressed, such as meeting the ACNC obligations, reporting to other regulators, adhering to the relevant laws and standards, and managing the potential risks and opportunities.
- > **Human Resources and Organisational Development:** A report on the human resources and organisational development matters that the organisation dealt with or implemented, such as staff and volunteer recruitment, retention, training, performance, wellbeing, diversity, and organisational structure, culture, policies, and procedures.
- > **Stakeholder Engagement and Communication:** A report on the stakeholder engagement and communication activities that the organisation conducted or participated in, such as fundraising, advocacy, collaboration, media, and feedback, and the outcomes and impacts of these activities on the clients and the community.
- > **Future Plans and Priorities:** A report on the future plans and priorities of the organisation for the next reporting period, such as the strategic directions, objectives, initiatives, and indicators, the budget and forecast, the opportunities and threats, and the projects and programs.
- > **Conclusion:** A summary of the main points and highlights of the report, an expression of gratitude and appreciation to the board, the staff, the volunteers, the clients, and the stakeholders, and an invitation for questions, comments, or suggestions from the board.



If we don't understand something or need to know more, it's our job to ask!

TIP



CEOs of gendered violence services have often been practitioners or specialists in their fields of expertise. They are highly skilled in these areas and may be developing their skills in broader strategic and governance skills. The best support a Board can provide is to fill the knowledge gaps around governance.

Rosie



As board members we are responsible for setting a high standard for management to report information. We need to be curious and make proper inquiries of the information provided.

TIP

EFFECTIVE PROCESSES



Working as a team

As board members, we play an important role in shaping the culture of the organisation.

We can have a positive impact on organisational culture by:

- > Working together in solidarity with the CEO
- > Centralising the service purpose and mission rather than following individual agendas
- > Holding ourselves and others on the board accountable
- > Having clear expectations of each other and what happens when these are not met
- > Ensuring conflict resolution policies and procedures in place and enacted
- > Representing the organisation and adherence to the code of conduct
- > Acting on code of conduct breaches at all levels.



Jot down your thoughts

What else can a board do from an intersectional feminist governance perspective?

Measuring the board's performance

As board members we carry responsibilities and have significant duties to uphold. It is important to be clear about how we measure and manage our performance and conduct to ensure we are helping and not hindering the organisation to achieve its purpose and strategy.

Some processes to consider are:

- > Setting clear expectations, objectives, and indicators for the board's governance
- > Evaluating and improving our skills, knowledge, and capabilities
- > Providing and receiving feedback, recognition, and support among the board members
- > Resolving any conflicts or disputes that may arise within the board
- > Fostering a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration among the board members.



Jot down your thoughts

How am I contributing to a positive working culture within the board?

.....

How can I raise issues of concern about matters that are or may impact the culture of the board?

.....

When the board is operating well as a team, what would I notice?

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Working in solidarity

Working in solidarity with other people, organisations and community is a concept that is core to both feminist and union movements. It speaks not only to us working together but how to work together to centralise the cause of victim-survivors' rights and safety.

A feminist governance framework involves working in solidarity. It is important to explore what that looks like and how it is enacted at the governance level.

As we are developing our feminist governance frameworks and considering how we may best work in solidarity, it is important to have conversations about how we:

- > Are committed to eradicating gender-based violence
- > Centralise the cause of responding to and eradicating gender-based violence
- > Challenge political, economic, social and legal structures that oppress women
- > Work to redress structural inequities that exist on the basis of gender identity, race, sex, ability etc
- > Celebrate and notice the strengths of victim-survivors and ensure we are not assuming vulnerability
- > Ensure that victim-survivors are involved in and have a voice in the development of programs that impact them
- > Are accountable and responsive to women and victim-survivors in the community
- > Share power, knowledge and expertise with victim-survivors so they can advocate on their own behalf
- > Avoid colluding with gender stereotypes and continue to explore and eradicate internalised misogyny and racism
- > Commit to each other in solidarity.



Working in solidarity means maintaining a sustained and mutual commitment to a shared goal or mission and involves adopting a collaborative approach that actively avoids replicating or reinforcing systems of power and oppression in our methods and actions.

On our board, this principle was reflected in several practices, particularly the commitment to inclusion in decision-making processes and the centering of people with lived experience of intellectual disability and violence.

For example, new board members or those with less professional experience were actively encouraged to participate in discussions and voice any questions or concerns.

While a power imbalance inevitably existed, intentional steps were taken to mitigate it. Additionally, the board included a position specifically for a person with lived experience.

This member's needs were thoughtfully accommodated in terms of accessibility, input, and participation, ensuring their voice was equally valued and heard.

Hannah



COLLECTIVE CARE AND SOLIDARITY

'Our best resource for this work is each other. Our solidarity drew us to this work and it can foster our collective sustainability. A useful strategy is to build a Solidarity Team of people who shoulder you up in this work and have the moral courage to offer you critique and keep you connected to our collective ethics in resisting gender-based violence.' Vicky Reynolds

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Important relationships and connections for intersectional feminist governance include:



Intersectional feminist governance means prioritising the experiences and voices of those most affected by intersecting forms of oppression. It involves recognising and addressing how different identities interact to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

Key practices of intersectional feminist governance in board operations are inclusive representation, equitable decision-making, transparent accountability, and allowing for feedback and critique from the communities served.

Anonymous



Co-create a board environment that encourages reflection on an individual and organisational level. Value opportunities to learn from successes as well as mistakes and work to ensure all voices have a place on your board.

TIP



Professional relationship with the CEO/Manager

A professional and clearly defined relationship with the CEO of the organisation is critical to the success of the organisation. Here are some tips for ensuring a positive and successful relationship.

Try to establish:

- > **Clear roles and expectations** for the board and the CEO and communicate them regularly
- > Clear and **measurable goals** and indicators for the CEO's performance, regular **feedback** and evaluation
- > **Support** for the CEO's professional development, recognition of their achievements, and **constructive criticism**
- > **Constructive** dialogue and debate, **respect** for a diversity of opinions and perspectives, while maintaining a shared vision, mission, values, and goals for the organisation
- > **Trust** and respect between the board and the CEO fostering a culture of **openness** and **transparency**
- > **Delegation** of authority and **responsibility** to the CEO, and avoidance of micromanaging or interfering with their work
- > **Collaboration** with the CEO on strategic issues, challenges, and opportunities
- > Supporting and **empowering** each other, and providing **guidance**, mentoring, and coaching to enhance the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of the CEO and the board
- > Maintaining a healthy **balance** between **support** and **oversight**, and between involvement and detachment
- > Resolving any conflicts or disputes in a **respectful** and **timely** manner and seeking mediation or arbitration if necessary.



The CEO and Board work together - lifting each other up.

Anonymous



EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Working relationship with the funding body

A positive working relationship with the funding body is critical to the organisation's success so it's important to understand our role as board members in this relationship. Here are some tips for ensuring a positive and successful relationship:

- > Clear delegations to the CEO/Manager as the voice of the organisation
- > Develop the organisations profile and voice through the CEO/Manager of the organisation and the Chairperson of the board where appropriate
- > Clear delegations around what can be communicated to the funding body including space for the CEO/Manager to advocate for change
- > Clear delegations and processes for potential new funding e.g., progressing tender applications to completion
- > Ensuring regular and transparent communication with the government funding body and the organisations' timely and accurate provision of information and feedback on the organisation's performance, challenges, and opportunities
- > Demonstration of the impact and value of the organisation's work with the clients and the community and provide evidence and examples of the outcomes and achievements of the funded programs and services
- > Seek and respond to the government funding body's input and advice on strategic, financial, operational, and risk management issues, and collaborate and consult on any changes or improvements that may affect the funding agreement or relationship
- > Acknowledge and appreciate the funding body's contribution and support to the organisation and recognise their role and expectations as a key stakeholder.

One of the important aspects of my role as CEO was to develop and maintain a positive working relationship with the funding body not just regionally but also with key people at the central office in Brisbane and the Minister at the time.

It felt daunting when I first started. The funding body has a lot of perceived as well as actual power and there can be a tendency to demonise them due to things like increasing demand, constant pressure to perform and not enough resources. I decided early on to focus on relationships and connect as a professional with a personal touch.

I found paying attention to the people working in the department and seeing them as people helped build that bridge across the power differentials and funding shortfalls.

We are all human beings and we work better together when we connect as such. The added bonus was growing a positive profile for the organisation and learning that there are some incredible people out there doing amazing work at all levels.

Gabrielle

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Positive and professional board relationships

Creating a cohesive and effective board team is crucial for the success of a gendered violence service. Here are some key points to help us work well together, manage personality differences, handle internal conflicts, and address conflicts of interest.

Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities

- > Appoint Chairperson and Treasurer
- > Ensure board members are aware of the obligations of the role
- > Stay focussed on responsibilities such as preparing for board meetings and declaring conflicts of interest.

Strong Board Orientation and Training Provide

- > Policies and procedures around the board's obligations and processes
- > Ensure all board members are equipped for their role by encouraging them to complete NFP governance training.

Foster a Culture of Open Communication

- > Encourage open and honest communication among board members, creating an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and there is room for critical reflection
- > Co-create regular opportunities for board members to share their thoughts, concerns, and ideas during meetings and outside of them.

Define a Code of Conduct

- > Develop and adopt a board code of conduct that outlines expected behaviours, ethical standards, and guidelines that align with the values of the organisation and the behaviours you want to foster.

Emphasise Purpose, Mission, Vision and Values

- > Keep the organisation's purpose, mission, vision and values at the forefront of all discussions and decisions to maintain a shared sense of purpose and commitment among board members.

Diverse and Inclusive Board Composition

- > Recruit board members with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to open up space for a well-rounded decision-making process
- > Ensure processes are inclusive and actively encourage all voices to be heard and respected. Check dominant personalities and make room for people who may be quieter.

Conflict Resolution Protocols

- > Draft a clear conflict resolution protocol together as a board to address conflicts that may arise within the board and stick to them. This can include a designated individual or committee responsible for managing more formal disputes
- > Encourage constructive conflict resolution techniques, such as active listening, being curious about other perspectives, empathy, co-creation and compromise.

EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

External Mediation if Necessary

- > If it becomes hard to resolve conflict internally among board members or between the board and the CEO/Manager, bring in external support to help mediate. Don't wait till it is boiling over as this situation can have devastating results for individuals and the organisation.

Regular Self-Reflection

- > Encourage practice reflection as leaders and as board members that supports critical and reflective processes to openly address any interpersonal tension or conflict. Make sure people are taking responsibility for their own behaviours.

Commit to Collective Decision-Making

- > Ensure decisions are being made collectively by the board rather than being driven by individual preferences or agendas or dominant personalities. Encourage consensus-building and compromise when necessary.

Supportive Leadership

- > The board Chair or President should provide clear, ethical, values-based and inclusive leadership, facilitating positive and purposeful discussions and ensuring all board members have the opportunity to contribute.

Maintain Confidentiality

- > Establish clear ethical expectations of all board members in regard to confidentiality of sensitive matters discussed as a board whether at meetings or in-between meetings to build trust among members. This should be balanced with accountable levels of transparency.

Regular Team-Building Activities

- > Organise purposeful and content-specific team-building activities outside of formal meetings to foster stronger professional relationships and trust among board members.



Effective and positive working relationships among board members are imperative to good governance. Relationships are complicated at times and can be challenging. We all bring our whole selves to work regardless of how much of that we present externally. Boards are expected to operate as a team and make complex decisions but only spend a couple of hours with each other once a month or less. We developed an induction process for the board and made time after each AGM for a team process. Opportunities to connect and build on professional relationships helped to grow the team cohesiveness required for sound decision-making and a positive culture.

Gabrielle



EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Fundraising

Many gendered violence services will fundraise to support their work, raise their profile, and further their cause. A well-connected, committed and active board is greatly appreciated and can help by:

- > Identifying and cultivating potential donors, such as individuals, foundations, corporations, or government agencies
- > Assisting the organisation to develop and execute a fundraising plan that aligns with the organisation's mission, vision, and goals
- > Participating in fundraising activities, such as events, campaigns, appeals, or grant proposals
- > Introducing personal and professional contacts to the organisation and invite them to support its work
- > Educating the community and stakeholders about the organisation's value and impact
- > Overseeing the financial management and accountability of the organisation's fundraising efforts
- > Ensuring fundraising activities don't put unnecessary pressure on the staff and impact service delivery
- > Ensuring funds raised have a clearly defined purpose and continue to advocate to funding bodies to fully fund service needs and demand
- > Declaring and managing any potential conflict of interest that may arise due to fundraising activities.



Jot down your thoughts

How can I ensure key stakeholders are considered in our board decision-making and planning?

.....

What beneficial relationships can I facilitate to support the organisation's fundraising efforts?

.....

How can I actively contribute to raising the profile of the service and its cause?



I consider board service as an opportunity for learning and growth, both professionally and personally.

As a board member, learning about the work of a non-profit from the inside allows for that learning which goes beyond theory.

It provides opportunities to work with a cross-section of other people and professionals with different approaches to leading, communicating, and problem solving, given the diversity of skills and experience that each board member brings.

Hannah



Board Capabilities and Effectiveness



Key Take Aways

- > Clarity about the organisation's purpose and the value base that underpins services is critical
- > Effective governance requires continuous learning and commitment to improvement
- > Feminist governance is about working in solidarity to eradicate gender-based violence
- > The board is responsible for being aware of risks and how to manage them
- > The board is responsible for understanding their roles and responsibilities
- > All board members have responsibility for finances – don't just leave that to the Treasurer
- > Board members must understand the legal, ethical, and funding requirements of the organisation
- > A thorough induction for new board members is important as well as continuing to improve the induction process for new members
- > The board must be clear about its remit – what are the governance responsibilities and what are the delegated operational responsibilities of the CEO and staff?



The organisation will be stronger when there is a unified and positive leadership between the board and CEO that is characterised by mutual trust and respect.

TIP

Group Activity and Reflection



Develop an agreement to commit to working in solidarity

1. Discuss and document your shared commitment to implementing the concept of working in solidarity as a board
2. Reflect on how you are doing this well, and how you might like to make improvements
3. Make this commitment a guide for your work together to ensure you are always working together to centralise the cause of ending gendered violence
4. Make this commitment to begin every meeting along with an Acknowledgement of Country.



Working in solidarity to further the cause of ending gendered violence is part of the work. It takes time, effort and resources that should be factored into all relevant decisions.

TIP

Reflective Questions

- > What strategies do we have in place to ensure effective governance processes?
- > How do we ensure that we continue to improve our governance processes?
- > How do we ensure we have the right people at our board table?
- > How do we hold each other accountable?
- > How do we challenge inappropriate behaviour such as undermining the CEO or inappropriately sharing information with staff?
- > What conversations do we need to have about diversity and inclusion?
- > How well are our important stakeholder relationships functioning? Do we need to pay more attention to any? How?
- > Are any of our key relationships getting in the way of our work or the organisational purpose? How do we manage this?
- > How well are we supporting and empowering the CEO to fulfill their role?
- > How do we ensure we are adhering to the highest standards of ethics, integrity and accountability?
- > How do we foster a culture of respect and collaboration with the CEO recognising their role and expertise as a key stakeholder?
- > How are we contributing to a responsive rather than reactive organisation?
- > What contributions are we making as a board to the fundraising efforts of the service? What more do we need to do?
- > How do we show that we value and appreciate staff efforts and work in solidarity with them to further the cause?

Melissa - Board Story

I have a diverse background across NFPs and business at a leadership level including the provision of advisory services to Boards. I also have lived experience of gendered violence. I was approached at a speaking engagement about contributing to the board of a local service.

I met with the CEO and felt a positive connection and value alignment with her and the organisation. I believed I could bring a different perspective and contribute multi-disciplinary skills and experience to the vision for the service. This has, over time, equipped me for the role of Chair, Deputy Chair, and Treasurer.

The greatest lesson (and gift) these roles has given me is that every assumption I made about the sector was wrong! I very early on decided that I could only be of value and serve the organisation if I let go of judgments and preconceptions that, while not ill-intended, were possibly misguided. I learnt to identify, reflect on, and let go of all preconceptions.

This has enabled me to work well with the CEO and effectively serve the Board. It is essential as a board member to reflect critically. If board members can't do this, or are unwilling to do so, it can cause friction and may also lead to unsatisfactory experiences for board members or the service.

One of the strategies we've used to connect the board to the work of the organisation is to provide opportunities for direct experience of the work. The board has participated in a facilitated experiential workshop which helps us to understand the context of the work, to step back and take a 'birds eye view' of the work, and to appreciate what it takes to deliver services. It gave us a taste of lived experience and I encourage every board member to ensure they understand the programs delivered and how the system works.

The critical learning for me in participating in these experiences was clarity. The work and the sector are complex. The balance Board members need to find is between understanding the work for the purposes of governance, without intervening in the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

Being crystal clear on our roles is crucial in developing a trusting relationship with the CEO. Micromanaging and getting involved in operational matters is unhelpful and tells the CEO and leadership team they don't have the trust of the Board. The CEO needs to be confident the board supports her in leading the organisation and the team. The ability to have honest and robust conversations and manage professional boundaries is critical to this relationship.

It's important to have a board with a diversity of skill sets and backgrounds. It also means there will be robust conversations with a range of perspectives. We operate on the basis that consensus doesn't require unanimity.

.....

We might not all share the same opinion, but once we arrive at a decision, we all support it. What is helpful is having a Board Chair who facilitates these conversations respectfully to enable effective decision making.

.....



The Nature of the Work



This section helps us understand the nature of the work of a gendered violence service.

In the following pages, we explore the drivers of gendered violence and what it is.

An overview of some of the drivers of change underway at a state and national level is provided. And, we explore the funding and legal obligations that services are working with and the board's role in ensuring a sustainable and thriving workforce.

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

In governing a gendered violence service, including engaging in advocacy, it is critical to have clarity about the systemic drivers of gender-based violence and what it looks like. This understanding also helps us connect to the purpose of the work and work constructively with stakeholders including the CEO. It helps inform us as board members in making decisions that support high-quality service provision.

A range of contextual and systemic factors drive gender-based violence in Australia. Some of the primary drivers are gender inequality and inequity that is still more pervasive than we want to admit. We live in a society where rigid gender roles and dominant forms of masculinity can enable control over and violence against women, children, other men, young people and people who are 'different'.

Our structural, legal, and political systems still may not hold men accountable enough for their violence and continue to promote and enforce rigid and hierarchical gender stereotypes that underpin gender-based violence. We live in a society where aggression and disrespect towards women is trivialised.

Ours is also a society where other forms of systemic and structural inequality exist such as heteronormativity, racism, ableism, cissexism, agism, class discrimination as well as the ongoing impacts of colonialism. These factors also continue to enable and normalise violence against women.

Adapted from Our Watch, Socio-Ecological Model for Prevention

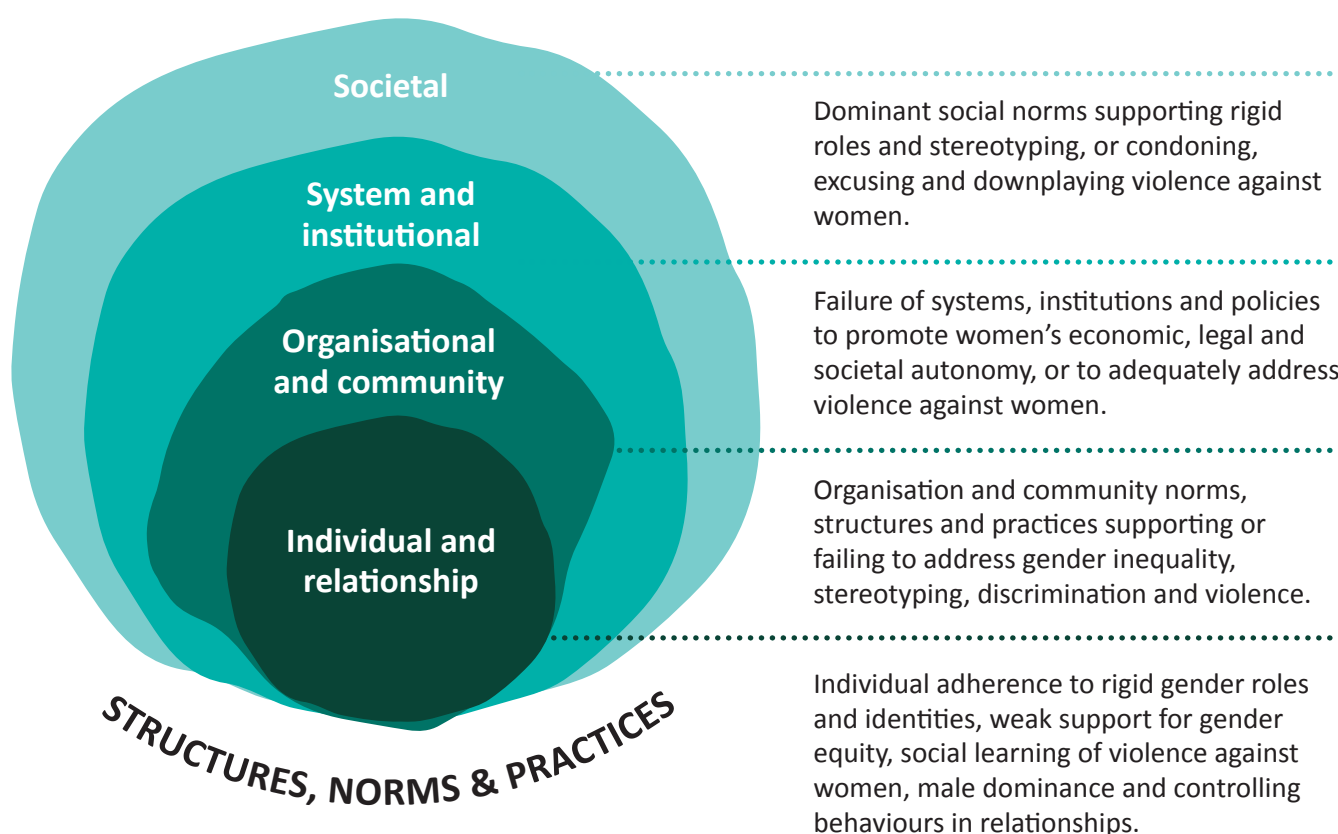


DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

The Socio-Ecological Model for Prevention

The socio-ecological model below demonstrates how violence against women occurs as the result of many factors at different levels. It reminds us of our responsibility at board level to ensure we are working in solidarity with the community and service system to support gender equality.

Examples of structures, norms and practices found to increase the probability of violence against women, at different levels of the socio ecology.



(Our Watch, n.d.)

Intersectional Feminist Governance must be cognisant not to replicate the oppression inherent in power structures. If our collective goal is to do work that liberates rather than oppresses, then to be congruent we need to govern and lead in a way that liberates rather than oppresses. This means we need to understand what choices look like from the bottom and middle of the hierarchy, and how the decisions at a board level impact the community and workforce. We must actively seek feedback on the impact of our decisions and agitate for change at systemic and societal levels.

Rosie

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

Examples of systemic drivers of gender-based violence

1. Patriarchy and gender inequality:

One of the fundamental drivers of domestic and family violence is the patriarchal system, which places men in positions of power and women in subordinate roles. This power imbalance reinforces traditional gender norms and encourages the use of violence to control and dominate women.

Watch *Change the Story* video

[CLICK HERE](#)



2. Cultural and social norms:

Societal norms and cultural practices that condone or tolerate violence against women can perpetuate this problem. These norms often reinforce traditional gender roles, attitudes that devalue women, amidst a culture of silence that discourages victims from speaking out.

My learning about gendered violence is ongoing and so is our learning here in Queensland. The key to change is in all of us and in our commitment to understanding what beliefs and values we have taken on and internalised. It is in our willingness to challenge and change. I still encounter internalised misogyny in my own thinking, despite being a wholehearted feminist, because it permeates everything. Any change we seek requires our insight into the issue and our actions to do differently. Until we are prepared to state openly without apology what these drivers are and who has the power and responsibility to make the change we are moving incrementally when we could be revolutionary.

Gabrielle

3. Economic disparities:

Economic inequalities can contribute to domestic violence as perpetrators may use financial control as a means of asserting power over their victims. Lack of financial independence can also trap victims in abusive relationships.

4. Institutional failures:

The failures of various institutions, such as law enforcement, legal systems, and social services to adequately respond to domestic violence can perpetuate the cycle. Victims may not report abuse due to fear of retaliation or mistrust in these systems.

5. Lack of education and awareness:

A lack of comprehensive education on healthy relationships, consent, and gender equality can perpetuate ignorance about domestic violence. Many people may not recognise abusive behaviour or know how to seek help.

6. Social stigma:

Victims of domestic violence often face significant social stigma and shame, which can discourage them from seeking help or reporting the abuse. This stigma can be exacerbated by cultural and religious factors.

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

7. Legal and judicial barriers:

Systemic issues within legal and justice systems can perpetuate domestic violence. These include insufficient legal protections for victims, lenient sentencing of perpetrators, and biases within the justice system that may favour the abuser.

8. Law enforcement response:

Inadequate training for law enforcement personnel on handling domestic or sexual violence cases, as well as biases or stereotypes held by some officers, can lead to inconsistent or insufficient responses to reports of abuse.

9. Healthcare system shortcomings:

Healthcare professionals may not always be adequately trained to identify and respond to domestic or sexual violence, resulting in missed opportunities to intervene and provide support to victims.

10. Child protection services:

Child protective services may not always effectively assess or address domestic violence in homes, potentially putting children at risk or separating them from their abused parent.

11. Policy gaps:

Gaps in laws and policies related to domestic or sexual violence, including those that do not adequately address issues such as dating violence or violence within LGBTQIA+ relationships, can create barriers to preventative work and service responses to abuse.

12. Political climate:

Political ideologies and policies can either support or hinder efforts to address domestic violence. A lack of political will to fund and prioritise prevention and support services can have a significant impact.

13. Education system:

Inadequate sex education and curriculum that does not address issues related to consent, healthy relationships, and gender equality can contribute to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and behaviours.

14. Lack of accessible support services:

The availability and accessibility of shelters, counselling, legal aid, and other support services can vary widely by location, leaving some victims with limited options for escape and recovery.

15. Economic and housing policies:

Economic policies that perpetuate income inequality or housing policies that make it difficult for victims to secure stable housing can leave them financially dependent on their perpetrators.

16. Media and entertainment:

Media portrayals that normalise or romanticise violence in relationships can contribute to distorted perceptions of healthy relationships and gender roles, potentially perpetuating domestic violence.

17. Economic disparities:

Broader systemic issues, such as income inequality and poverty, can exacerbate domestic violence by creating additional stressors and limiting resources for both victims and perpetrators.

18. Cultural and social tolerance:

Societal tolerance of sexism, racism, ableism, misogyny, and gender-based violence can contribute to a culture in which abusive behaviours are more likely to be tolerated or excused.

19. Institutional discrimination:

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other factors can compound the vulnerability of certain individuals to domestic violence and make it harder for them to access support services.

Adapted from Our Watch (2017)

Good governance of a gendered violence service is about working for the good of the people and striving for just outcomes that respond to and seek to rebalance unequal power relations.

Anonymous

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

How technology drives gendered violence

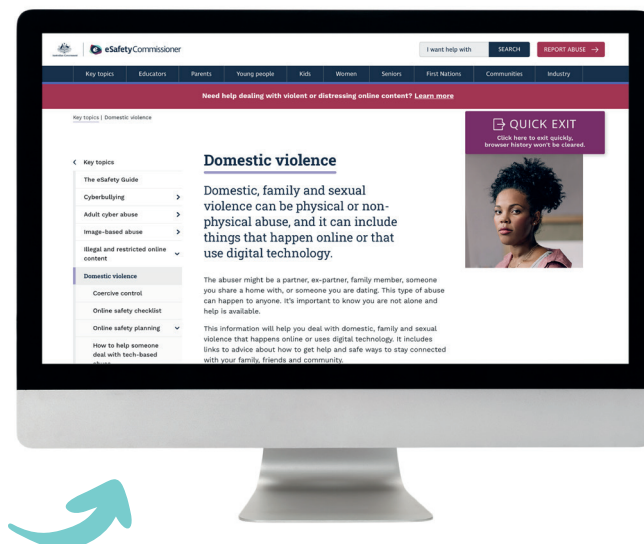
Increasingly, perpetrators are finding more and more ways to perpetrate abuse by using technology. This is known as technology-facilitated gender-based violence or tech-based gendered abuse.

This type of abuse can have significant consequences for victim-survivors and their children and affects how practitioners approach their work, their relationships and their communities, and the things they need to consider when safety planning.

It is important to keep up to date with emerging changes in this space to support our advocacy, planning, and service delivery considerations.

Check out the
eSafety Commissioner
website

CLICK HERE



Here are some key points to understand how technology can drive gender-based violence:



1. Online harassment and cyberbullying:

Social media platforms and messaging apps are used to send abusive messages, threats, and harassment, targeting individuals based on their gender.

2. Revenge porn:

Perpetrators share explicit images or videos without consent, often as a form of revenge or control, causing emotional distress and harm to the victim.

3. Online stalking:

Digital tools enable stalkers to track their victims' online activities, location, and personal information, leading to feelings of insecurity and fear.

4. Catfishing and deception:

Perpetrators create fake online personas to manipulate and deceive victims emotionally, financially, or for personal gain.

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

5. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images (NCDII):

Perpetrators share intimate images or videos of someone without their consent, leading to embarrassment, shame, and damage to the victim's reputation.

6. AI and deepfakes:

Artificial intelligence and deepfake technology can be used to create realistic but fabricated content, including fake videos or audio recordings, which can be used for harassment or defamation.

7. Online forums and communities:

Some online communities foster misogynistic ideologies, normalising gender-based violence and providing a platform for individuals to share harmful views.

8. Privacy invasion:

Technology can be used to invade someone's privacy through hacking, surveillance, or the use of hidden cameras, leading to a sense of vulnerability.

9. Digital manipulation:

Photoshopping and digital manipulation can be employed to alter images and manipulate appearances, further contributing to unrealistic beauty standards and objectification.

We need to be absolutely crystal clear. Board members need to be aware of the nature of the work and stay out of the way of the work. The board must support the CEO and leadership team and keep focus on governance and strategy oversight. The role is not about having opinions, making judgments or providing advice on operational matters.

Anonymous

10. Dissemination of harmful content:

Perpetrators may spread false or damaging information about someone online, causing harm to their personal and professional life.

11. Online dating violence:

Dating apps can be used to exploit and abuse individuals, with perpetrators using technology to control, intimidate, or harm their partners.

12. Lack of accountability:

The anonymity provided by technology sometimes allows perpetrators to avoid consequences, making it difficult for victims to seek justice.

13. Perpetuation of stereotypes:

Social media, online content, and algorithms can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes, reinforcing existing biases and prejudices.

14. Economic abuse:

Technology can be used to control finances and restrict access to resources, making it difficult for victims to leave abusive relationships.

15. Isolation and manipulation:

Perpetrators may use technology to isolate victims from friends and support networks, making it harder for them to seek help or escape abusive situations.

16. Lack of awareness and education:

Insufficient education and awareness about the dangers of technology-facilitated gender-based violence can leave individuals vulnerable and unprepared to protect themselves.

(Powell & Henry, 20217)

Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach involving technology companies, law enforcement, policymakers, and society at large to create a safer digital environment and support victims of gender-based violence while also holding perpetrators to account.



What else can influence gendered violence and access to support?

Many other factors play a key role in driving gender-based violence as well as creating significant barriers for victim-survivors seeking support and safety. Examples include:

1. Isolation:

Isolation of victims from friends and family is a common tactic used by perpetrators to maintain control. This isolation can make it difficult for victims to seek support or escape abusive situations.

2. Mental health issues:

Both perpetrators and victims may have underlying mental health issues that contribute to domestic violence. This includes conditions like depression, anxiety, and personality disorders.

3. Childhood experiences:

Individuals who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence in their own childhoods may be more likely to become either victims or perpetrators themselves.

4. Immigration status:

Immigrant women may be particularly vulnerable to domestic violence due to their immigration status, as perpetrators can use the threat of deportation to control them.

5. Lack of legal protections:

In some societies or regions, laws and legal protections for victims of domestic violence may be inadequate or not effectively enforced, leaving victims with little recourse.

6. Economic stressors:

Economic downturns, unemployment, and financial stress can intensify domestic violence, as perpetrators may become more frustrated and aggressive under such conditions.

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

7. Community tolerance:

The level of tolerance or acceptance of domestic violence within a community can play a significant role. In some communities, domestic violence may be normalised or excused, making it harder for victims to seek help or for perpetrators to face consequences.

8. Religious beliefs

Religious beliefs and interpretations can either support or condemn domestic violence. Some religious or cultural contexts may misinterpret scriptures or traditions to justify abusive behaviour or to discourage victims from leaving abusive relationships.

9. Access to weapons:

The presence of firearms or other weapons in a household can escalate the risk of violence. Perpetrators who have access to weapons are more likely to use them to intimidate or harm their victims.

10. Disability:

Individuals with disabilities may be at higher risk of domestic violence due to increased vulnerability, dependency on caregivers, and limited mobility. Perpetrators may exploit these vulnerabilities.

11. Legal status:

Undocumented immigrants or individuals with precarious legal status may be reluctant to report domestic violence for fear of deportation or legal repercussions. Perpetrators may exploit this vulnerability as a means of control.

12. LGBTQIA+ discrimination:

LGBTQIA+ individuals may face domestic violence within their relationships, and they may be reluctant to seek help due to fear of discrimination or misunderstanding by service providers.

13. Cultural language barriers and norms:

In some cultures, the concept of “honour” can be used to justify violence against family members, particularly women who are perceived to have violated cultural norms or family honour. For immigrant or refugee populations, language barriers and limited knowledge of local laws and resources can hinder their ability to seek help or understand their rights.

14. Substance use disorders:

Substance abuse by either the victim or the abuser can lead to more frequent and severe instances of domestic violence. Drugs and alcohol can impair judgment and increase aggression.

15. Digital technology:

The misuse of digital technology, such as surveillance apps, tracking devices, or cyberbullying, can extend the reach of abuse and make it harder for victims to escape their perpetrators.

16. Child custody concerns:

Concerns about losing custody of their children can deter some victims from reporting abuse or seeking help, particularly if they fear that authorities may view them as unfit parents due to the violence.



ANROWS - Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?

Multiple definitions for domestic and family violence exist. There are legal definitions contained within the legislation. There are definitions used by practitioners that may differ by organisation, target group or focus of interventions. There are also definitions developed by people with lived experience of violence.

In our role as board members who govern a gendered violence service, it is important to familiarise ourselves with the law and all other relevant definitions for the service.

Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2012

[CLICK HERE](#)



Key points about DFV:

- > It is controlling behaviour, violence, or abuse
- > It is about gaining and maintaining control
- > It is an ongoing pattern of behaviour that may cause the victim to feel afraid and unsafe
- > It can and does happen in all types of relationships
- > It is most often perpetrated by men against women
- > It often has severe and long-lasting physical, emotional and mental impacts on anyone experiencing or witnessing it
- > Is punishable as a crime in Queensland.

Can domestic and family violence be mutual abuse?

Domestic and family violence is not the same as having a fight or an argument. It is not the same as having communication issues and resorting to low-level mutual aggression.

- > ‘Mutually violent’ is a label often unfairly given to women who defend themselves or their children
- > Mutual violence cannot exist in a power dynamic where one partner physically and psychologically dominates the other
- > When addressing acts of aggression, it is important not to confuse an act of resistance or self-defence with an attempt to overpower or control
- > Where an act of violence is an isolated response to a partner’s patterned and systematic use of violence against them, this should not be confused with mutual violence.

(Schonberg, 2005)



As board members, we do not have to be experts in gendered violence, however, it is critical to understand the context of our service’s work so that we can appropriately support its mission and sustainability.

TIP

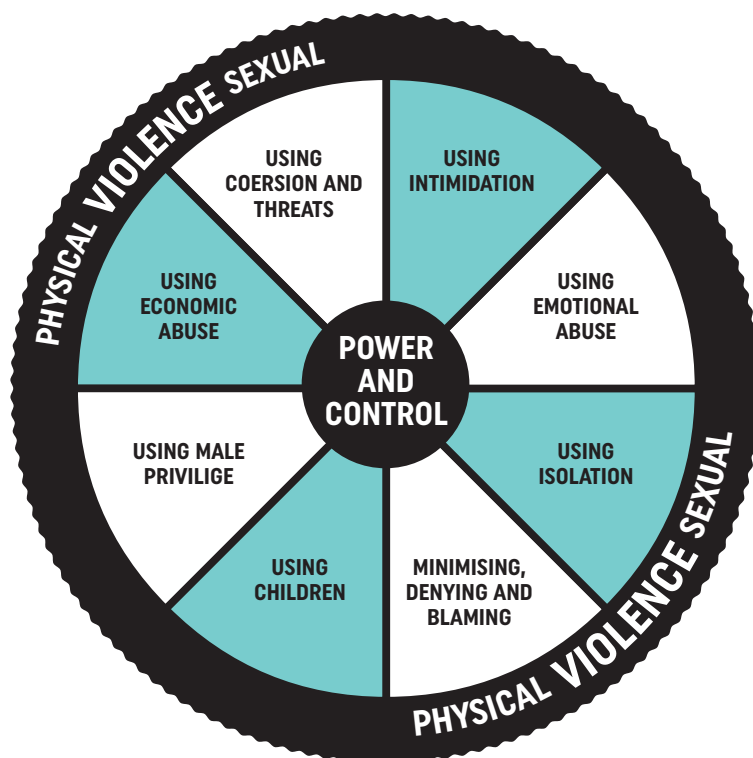
Coercive control is almost always an underpinning dynamic of domestic and family violence. It is a deliberate and rational pattern of behaviours used against another person to manipulate and control them and limit their freedom and agency.

(Queensland Government, 2023)

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?

Power and control

Domestic violence is characterised by a pattern of violent and controlling behaviour and tactics that an individual uses to intentionally dominate, intimidate and control a person's intimate partner.



Domestic violence is not about loss of control. It is not caused by drug or alcohol use, mental health issues or rage. Complexities like substance use may exacerbate the violence but is not the cause of it. A person using violence against their partner, their family or a person they are caring for are making a deliberate choice. They are behaving this way to have power over them and are using controlling and abusive behaviour to do so.

Power and control is the definitional element of abuse. Domestic and family violence as a type of control is deliberate and can quickly grow to be constant. If the victim resists or tries to disregard the control, the situation can escalate rapidly.
The cause of violence is the person using it.

A tool that is often used in the gendered violence sector is called the Power and Control wheel. This tool was developed in 1984 by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, USA,

through months of focus groups with women impacted by domestic and family violence who identified these main themes of violence. This wheel highlights some of the same types previously mentioned, but uses some different language and another way of illustrating what the pattern of abuse might be that (largely) men chose to use against their loved ones.

Domestic violence is characterised by a pattern of behaviour and actions that an individual uses to intentionally dominate, intimidate and control an intimate partner. These behaviours are the spokes of the wheel. Physical and sexual violence form the rim of the wheel as the ultimate form of power and control. Most gendered violence services will be using evidence-based tools like these to support their practice.

(Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 1984)

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?



Myths and Facts about DFV

MYTHS	FACTS
Men are just as likely to be victims of domestic and family violence as women.	> Research shows that domestic and family violence is most often committed by men against women > Men are most likely to experience violence by a stranger > Women are most likely to experience violence by someone they know in their own home.
Victims provoke domestic and family violence.	> Most victims of domestic and family violence do everything they can to try and stop the violence including adapting how they behave. This will not stop the violence because the victim is not causing it > The cause of the violence is the violent person who is trying to control the victim.
Women are just as violent in relationships as men.	> When women use violence in an intimate relationship, the context of that violence tends to differ from men > Men's use of violence against women is learned and reinforced while women's use of violence does not have the same kind of societal support > Most women who use violence against their male partners are responding to and resisting the controlling violence being used against them.
If victims wanted the violence to stop, they would just leave.	> No one wants to be abused or controlled. There are many complex reasons why a person chooses to stay or may be unable to leave an abusive relationship > Many victims of domestic and family violence want to leave, but they can't > Victims are most at risk when they try to leave or just after they have left.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?

MYTHS	FACTS
Domestic and family violence is a part of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures.	> Domestic and family violence is not a traditional part of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures > The history of colonisation, dispossession of land and culture, racism and the removal of children from their parents has created intergenerational grief and trauma > The intersection of these complex factors with gender inequality means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience higher rates and more severe forms of domestic and family violence compared to other women.
Women with a disability are less likely to experience domestic and family violence.	> People with a disability are twice as likely to experience physical or sexual violence by a partner, compared to people who do not have a disability, and often this violence goes unreported > Women with disabilities can experience forms of domestic and family violence that are particular to their increased dependency.
Domestic and family violence is more common in heterosexual relationships.	> People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual (LGBTIQA+) experience domestic and family violence from a partner at similar rates as those who identify as heterosexual > LGBTIQA+ people may find it more difficult to access services that meet their particular needs.
Children are not affected by domestic and family violence unless directly experienced.	> Research shows the impact of domestic and family violence on children can be significant regardless of whether they are directly experiencing it or witnessing violence against another family member.

(National Legal Aid, n.d.)

It's important for boards to model inclusivity and cultural safety.

Anonymous



Jot down your thoughts

How might you respond when you hear – ‘but men are just as likely to be victims too’?

.....

What other myths am I aware of that could be dangerous to victim-survivors?

.....

How skilled and confident do I feel in challenging myths, how do I build more confidence?

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?

Impacts of domestic and family violence

DFV can have significant short and long term impacts on a person's health and wellbeing.

For example:

- > Physical injuries such as cuts, scrapes and bruises, fractures and sometimes devastatingly, murder, or intimate partner homicide as it is referred to
- > Hearing or vision loss
- > Miscarriage or early delivery
- > Sexually transmitted diseases
- > Stress-related illnesses
- > Depression
- > Anxiety
- > Sleep disturbances
- > Confusion
- > Low self-esteem
- > Concentration difficulties
- > Feelings of helplessness
- > Alcohol and substance use/misuse
- > Hypervigilance
- > Difficulty making decisions.

It is also important to understand that even though children may not experience physical violence on their own bodies – them witnessing, hearing, or knowing that the violence is happening to their mother, sibling or another caregiver can have equally devastating short and long term impacts. Children are victims in their own right. This impact might show through significant behavioural problems, emotional distress, anxiety, depression, and developmental delays.

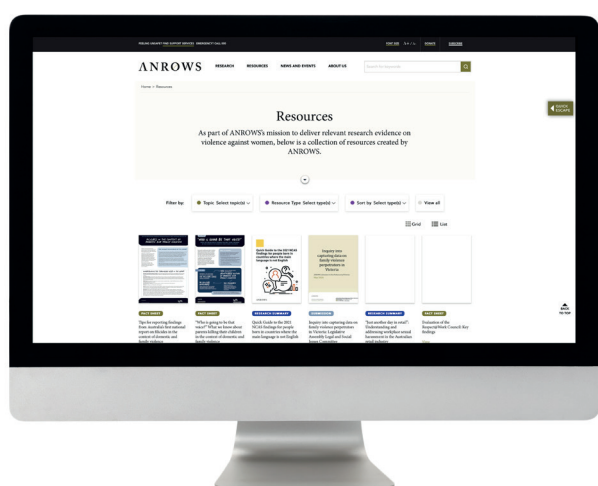
Gender-based violence can have profound and lasting effects on victim-survivors. This may include emotional, mental and physical injuries over time, resulting in trauma impacts that can be both immediate and long-lasting. Victim-survivors are at increased risk of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Domestic and family violence can impact a women's ability to parent due to ongoing safety concerns causing fear and terror and the emotional toll of having to manage that fear every day.

Due to existing rigid gender roles women often carry, the emotional and mental load of caring for children and a family can cause them to have to rely on their abusive partners for financial support. This creates additional barriers to seeking safety. Financial abuse also often causes poverty and homelessness for victim-survivors.

Victim-survivors may also be re-traumatised by the complex service system they have to navigate to seek support and try and keep themselves and their children safe while there is little accountability for the perpetrator. Victim-survivors may have limited capacity to make decisions due to the significant coercive control they experience from perpetrators as well as due to the additional control and expectations from service systems. Victim-survivors are at most of risk of significant harm or being killed when trying to leave.

(Ayre et. Al, 2016; Safe and Equal, n.d.)



ANROWS fast facts impacts of domestic and family violence

CLICK HERE



WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Sexual violence is any unwanted sexual behaviour towards another person. Women, men, children and young people can experience sexual violence however, sexual violence is a gendered issue, and the majority of victim-survivors are women and girls.

It can happen in public, private, or institutional settings and can be carried out by people known to the victim-survivor (including family members, partners, former partners) or by strangers.



Sexual violence includes:

Rape, sexual abuse, unwanted sexual advances/harassment and intimidation at work or elsewhere, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, sexual coercion, having sexual intercourse due to fear of what a partner could do, forced sex work, and trafficking.

Intimate partner violence includes:

Being physically forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to, having sexual intercourse because you were afraid of what your partner might do, and/or being forced to do something sexual that you found humiliating or degrading.

Non-partner violence:

“When aged 15 years or over, experience of being forced to perform any sexual act that you did not want to by someone other than your husband/partner.”

‘Sexual violence’ an umbrella term to include all crimes of a sexual nature

- > Child sexual abuse
- > Date rape
- > Fondling
- > Grooming
- > Incest
- > Rape in marriage
- > Harmful sexual behaviours
- > Molestation
- > Explicit texts or calls
- > Paedophilia
- > Rape
- > Revenge porn
- > Sexual abuse
- > Unwanted sexual behaviour or contact
- > Sexual harassment
- > Sexual offenders
- > Stalking
- > Sexual exploitation
- > Unwanted sex
- > Sexual assault
- > Technology-facilitated sexual abuse

Sexual violence often has lifelong impacts on the people who experience it. These impacts can include financial stress, poorer physical and mental health including chronic health conditions.

Women who experienced childhood sexual violence are also twice as likely as those who did not to experience sexual violence, domestic violence and physical violence as an adult.

WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Myths and Facts about sexual violence

MYTHS	FACTS
Sexual assaults are committed by strangers.	> The majority of people who commit sexual assaults know their victims and in some cases are relations, friends or work colleagues > Sexual assault can be committed within any type of relationship, including marriage, dating relationships, or by friends, acquaintances, a person you have just met, co-workers or family members.
Sexual assault is more likely to occur in a public place.	> Sexual assault can happen anywhere and anytime > Most sexual assaults often occur in private spaces such as homes of the victims or perpetrators.
Girls and women ask to be sexually assaulted by the way they dress and behave.	> Women and children of all ages, cultures and backgrounds are sexually assaulted > Women may dress in a way to attract or to feel good about themselves but that is different to asking to be sexually assaulted.
Rape is a 'spur of the moment' act.	> Most rapists plan carefully in advance, and set up situations so the rape can take place > A rapist is capable of raping again and again.
Women and children make up stories about being sexually assaulted.	> This is a commonly held belief in the community. But, research suggests only a minority of disclosures of sexual assault are false. Women are more likely to deny or minimise sexual assault experiences than make them up.
Sexual assault offenders are mentally ill.	> The majority of sexual offenders are not mentally ill. Mental illness does not cause people to sexually offend. Many sex offenders are functioning people in the community, they have jobs, are married, have children > The media often seem to focus on sex offenders who fit the stereotype; they are selective in who they choose to report on. This only helps to maintain the silence on sexual assault and makes it difficult for people to believe that someone who doesn't fit that profile could commit sexual offenses.
Men cannot be sexually assaulted.	> Any unwanted sexual contact against any person by any other person is a sexual assault.

Ref: QSAN <https://qsan.org.au/resources/svam2020-campaign/>

THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT INFORMS THE WORK OF A GENDERED VIOLENCE SERVICE?



It is important for us as board members to be across the upcoming changes in the gender-based violence sector to strategic policy plans, legislation, funding specifications, emerging issues, stakeholder engagement and media strategies.

The Queensland Government continues to consult and review plans, policy, legislation and funding purposes to improve not only responses but also funding purpose and outcomes. All of these spaces continue to change and it is imperative for board members to be across these changes to continue to advocate for victim-survivors, consult with various government bodies and to make sound and strategic decisions about the organisation's purpose and direction.

The table on the next page provides an overview of relevant state and national information. We have provided brief information and links for further exploration.



Jot down your thoughts

What have I learned about gendered violence that surprises me?

.....

How might understanding the causes of gendered violence support my role on the board?

.....

Have I identified any myths that I unconsciously held about gendered violence?

The board needs to reflect the community served to the greatest extent possible and tap into the relationships, systems and levers of power to best resource and equip the organisation.

Anonymous

THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT INFORMS THE WORK OF A GENDERED VIOLENCE SERVICE?

The table provides an overview of relevant state and national information. We have provided brief information and links for further exploration.

Federal Strategy	State Strategy	Funding Requirements	Legislation	Quality Framework	Other Relevant Frameworks
The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 Two 5-year Action Plans First action plan 2023-27 + activities addendum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence (2023)	The QLD DFV Prevention Strategy 2016 – 2026 (based on the Not Now Not Ever Report) Fourth Action Plan 2022-23 to 2025-26 of the DFV Prevention Strategy Queensland’s Framework for Action Reshaping our approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic and family violence Hear Her Voice Report 1: Addressing Coercive Control and DFV in QLD 2022 Hear Her Voice Report 2: Women and girls’ experiences across the criminal justice system Hear Her Voice Discussion Paper 3: Women and girls’ experiences across the criminal justice system as victims-survivors of sexual violence and also as accused persons and offenders Prevent. Support. Believe. Queensland’s Framework to address Sexual Violence Termination of Pregnancy Action Plan 2024 Ensuring women and pregnant people can access information and termination of pregnancy care that meets their needs Women and Girls Health Strategy 2032 To address health inequity and improve access to health care for women and girls	DFV Support Services Investment Specifications Sexual violence and women’s support services investment specification The Outputs and Performance Measures Catalogue Perpetrator intervention services requirements	<i>DFV Protection Act 2012 (QLD)</i> <i>Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023</i> The Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. DFV Information Sharing Guidelines <i>Child Protection Act 1999</i> <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i> <i>Public Guardian Act 2001</i> <i>The Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002</i> <i>The Criminal Code Act 1899</i> <i>Evidence Act 1977</i>	DFV Services Regulatory Framework DFV Services Practice Principles, Standards and Guidance Human Services Quality Framework (HSQF) HSQF Domestic and Family Violence Services Supplement	Suicide Prevention Framework for Working with People Impacted by DFV ANROWS National Risk Assessment Principles for DFV DFV Common Risk and Safety Framework DFV Responding to Sexual Assault and Child Sexual Abuse Queensland Government Interagency Guidelines for responding to children, young people and adults who have experienced sexual assault or child sexual abuse

THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT INFORMS THE WORK OF A GENDERED VIOLENCE SERVICE?



Reforms

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 is the overarching national policy framework that guides actions towards ending violence against women and children over the next 10 years.

It highlights how all parts of society, including governments, businesses and workplaces, media, schools and educational institutions, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector, communities and all individuals, should work together to achieve the shared vision of ending gender-based violence in one generation.

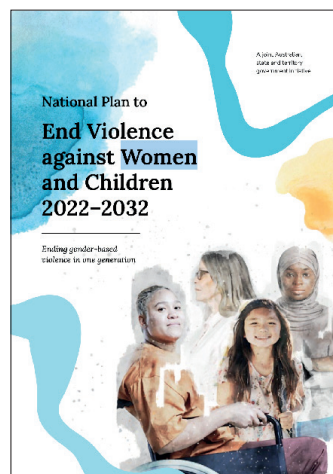
The dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan sits alongside the National Plan to End Violence. It has been developed in recognition of the disproportionately high rates of family, domestic and sexual violence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience.

Developing a robust strategic plan for the organisation involves looking into the horizon and considering emerging policy reforms and emerging evidence and what this means for the future. It must also be informed by the voices of victim-survivors and service users and include continuous improvement measures.

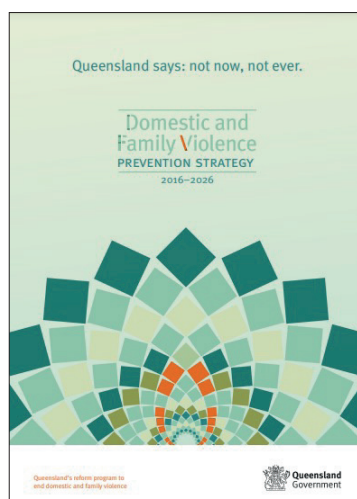
Anonymous

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

CLICK HERE



THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT INFORMS THE WORK OF A GENDERED VIOLENCE SERVICE?



Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016

CLICK HERE



The **Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce** was established in March 2021 to examine coercive control and review both the need for a specific offence of 'domestic violence' and, more broadly, the experience of women across the criminal justice system.

In February 2023, the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 was passed. It included amendments to:

- > Modernise and strengthen the offence of unlawful stalking
- > Amend the definition of 'domestic violence' to recognise a pattern of behaviour
- > Strengthen the court's ability to hear and decide cross applications
- > Strengthen the consideration of previous domestic and family violence or criminal history
- > Bring domestic and family violence complainants and other witnesses within the protected witness scheme.

Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce

CLICK HERE



State level

The Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland report was commissioned by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland in February 2015. The report made 140 recommendations for ending domestic and family violence in Queensland and all have been accepted by the State Government. According to the Queensland Government, all 140 recommendations were delivered as of 24 October 2019. In response, the Government released the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016 which sets the direction for collaborative action to end domestic and family violence across the state.



Jot down your thoughts

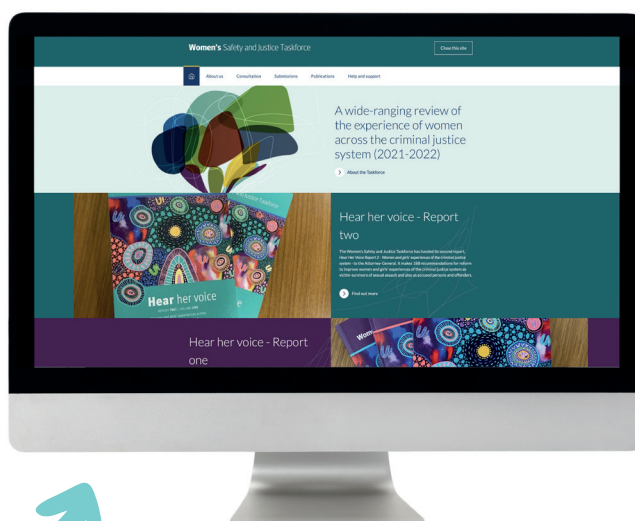
How can I keep abreast of emerging reforms impacting the service now and into the future?

.....

How might I encourage the board to keep informed about emerging issues and reforms?

.....

How might I use my position on the board to create change for victim-survivors of gender-based violence?



FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

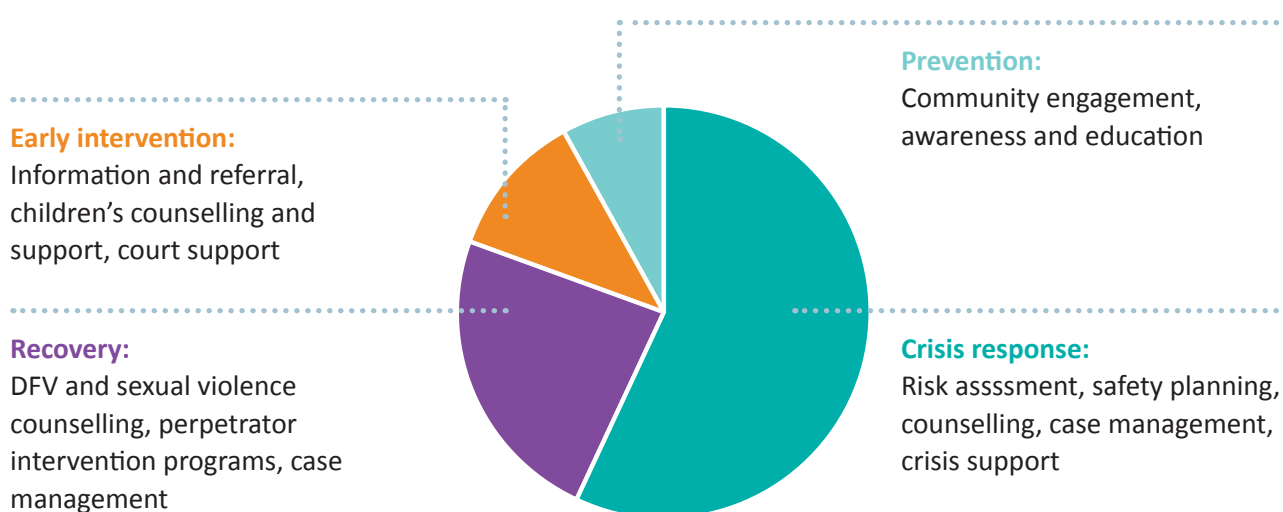


In this section we provide an overview of funding requirements and commitments of gendered violence services in Queensland funded by the Office for Women and Violence Prevention, Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Service initiatives range from specialist crisis responses and counselling for victim-survivors and children, advocacy, court support, perpetrator intervention programs, specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, housing responses such as shelters and telephone services such as DV Connect and 1800Respect.

The table below provides an overview of the types of services funded. In governing a gendered violence service as board members we may oversee one or more of these programs.

Funded Services



(Office for Women and Violence Prevention)

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

Legal and contractual requirements

Investment Specifications are for services that are funded under the Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Support Services funding areas.

The purpose of the investment specification is to:

- > Describe the intent of funding
- > Outline the service users and identified issues
- > Describe the service types and associated service delivery requirements.

It is crucial for us as board members to be aware of and understand the investment specifications attached to each funding schedule/program. This is the guiding document that sits behind the funding received and defines what we are holding the organisation accountable to.

With the investment specifications comes the Outputs and **Performance Measures Catalogue** that describes how to measure the work that is done. Our role as a board is to be able to talk through and ask questions to ensure reporting is ethical and accountable.

Domestic and Family
Violence Support Services

[CLICK HERE](#)



Individual service agreements

The investment specifications and performance measures catalogue go hand in hand with Funding Schedules/Agreements as it outlines service users, service types as well as:

- > Duration of funding
- > Service outlet
- > Funding amount
- > Details about the service
- > Deliverables (outputs, outcomes)
- > Service delivery requirements (outlined in investment specifications)
- > Reporting requirements.

Monitoring and compliance

Human Services Quality Framework

The Human Services Quality Framework includes mandatory evidence requirements common to all organisations as well as service specific requirements including:

- 1. Governance and Management**
Sound governance and management systems that maximise outcomes for stakeholders
- 2. Service Access**
Sound eligibility, entry and exit processes facilitate access to services on the basis of relative need and available resources
- 3. Responding to Individual Need**
The assessed needs of the individual are being appropriately addressed and responded to within resource capacity
- 4. Safety, Wellbeing and Rights**
The safety, wellbeing and human and legal rights of people using services are protected and promoted
- 5. Feedback, Complaints and Appeals**
Effective feedback, complaints and appeals processes that lead to improvements in service delivery
- 6. Human Resources**
Effective human resource management systems, including recruitment, induction and supervisory processes, result in quality service provision.



Human Services
Quality Framework

[CLICK HERE](#)

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

Domestic and Family Violence Regulatory Framework

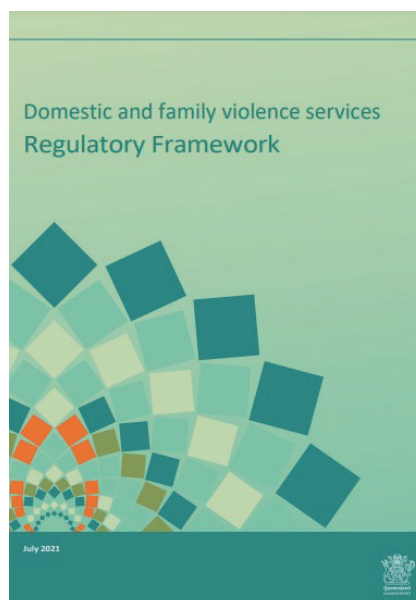
The Regulatory Framework for DFV Services came into effect on 1 January 2022. Services that are audited are assessed against the Regulatory Framework criteria and evidence, embedded in the Queensland Government's Human Service Quality Framework (HSQF) user guide as well as against the general mandatory HSQF requirement.

The Regulatory Framework is a monitoring and compliance mechanism to ensure a high standard of service delivery across DFV services that demonstrates compliance with the DFV Practice Principles, Standards and Guidance. As part of the Regulatory Framework, DFV-specific criteria, designed to measure the implementation of the Practice Standards, has been developed and embedded into the HSQF user guide.

The domestic and family violence practice standards are intended to outline the everyday practice expectations for people working in Queensland's domestic and family violence system. This includes staff working with victim-survivors (and their children) and perpetrators. The practice standards reflect the quality of services the community can expect from organisations that provide Queensland Government-funded domestic and family violence services.

**Practice, Principles,
Standards & Guidance**

[CLICK HERE](#)



Overall, organisations have moral and ethical expectations to:

- > Provide equitable, accessible, ethical and professional services across all programs
- > Initiate and drive systemic change
- > Advocate for the rights of victim-survivors regardless of program
- > Operate an organisation that upholds the rights of victim-survivors while holding perpetrators to account
- > Operate a fiscally sound as well as professional organisation
- > Implement and foster values that are conducive to a gendered analysis and mindful of power and how it is used in the organisation and in the systems surrounding the organisation
- > Operate according to the funded specifications and to report accurately on services provided as well as demand.



Jot down your thoughts

**Do I have sufficient knowledge
to provide appropriate oversight
of funded programs?
What else do I need?**

.....

**How confident do I feel to speak
to auditors about matters of
organisational compliance?**

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

The board sets the scene for a thriving workforce by modelling a positive culture that enables the service to achieve its purpose, mission and vision.

A positive culture in the gendered violence sector as described in the Workforce Capability Framework recognises honesty and vulnerability as a strength in creating resilience. It is one where we 'show up for ourselves and others' and contribute to a learning culture, working together to balance the intensity of the work in a reflective, calm and engaged manner.

A positive culture is one where personal and organisational values combine with a strong belief in the ability to make a positive difference in people's lives. These features help to advance and sustain the way we work. It is about being part of collective efforts, acting in solidarity with others, and celebrating achievements to facilitate a vibrant, valuing and meaningful culture.

Checkout the Workforce Capability Framework Domain 5 for more information.



Organisational culture is the collection of beliefs, values and ways of interacting that create the environment of an organisation.

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

How can we, as a board, set the scene for a thriving workforce and organisation?

WHAT	HOW
Model and enable positive work culture	> Ensure transparent improvement mechanisms are in place including clients, staff and stakeholders, e.g.; • Staff culture surveys • Staff turnover feedback • Client surveys/feedback • Complaints • WH&S data.
Inclusive decision-making	> Engage staff and seek feedback, e.g.; • Consult staff on program design and organisational change • The development of operational plans – i.e. ensure the budget allows for this.
Staff support and development	> Ensure staff have the support and development opportunities they need, e.g.; • Access to specialist EAP providers who understand the context and content of the work • Access to support for staff impacted by gendered violence • Build extra paid leave and work/life flexibility into budgets and processes • Professional supervision factored into budgets and resourcing plans • Budget provisions for staff support and upskilling annually and regularly.
Ongoing sustainability	> Ensure calculation of input hours for tenders, new contracts etc include costs and resourcing for practice development, support, supervision, i.e., do not overpromise at a cost to staff wellbeing/culture.



Everything a gendered violence service does is in the service of those experiencing violence, abuse and harm. The board must understand they are governing a social justice, human rights organisation and not a commercial business. Things that are logical and appropriate in their day jobs may not be useful or appropriate when making decisions that impact some of the most vulnerable in the community. Demand for services likely exceeds available support and the workforce may be under immense pressure. It may be difficult to attract and retain staff. The board needs to have processes in place to ensure they are working in support of the workforce.

Rosie





You are a well-connected former politician, passionate about ending domestic and family violence. Because of your high profile in the community, people often come to you to ‘get things done’ or to advocate on their behalf. Since leaving politics you have joined the board of a large domestic, family and sexual violence service.

You have been approached in your capacity as a board member following a high-profile domestic violence incident with the offer of a donation to develop a new women’s shelter. You believe this is a great opportunity for service expansion and a new funding stream. You are excited to bring this to the next board meeting for discussion where you expect it will be gratefully accepted.

When you bring this opportunity to the board meeting the CEO pushes back saying she feels this donation should go to the local existing women’s shelter where it fits within their scope and area of expertise. She also indicates they have enough on their hands with existing programs and funding increases.

How should you approach this offer with consideration of:

- > The process for considering this significant change in service delivery
- > The motives and expectations of the donor
- > The unintended strategic and operational consequences of this decision
- > The benefits and possible unintended consequences to service users of this new project
- > Stakeholders, including the community and service providers, especially as there is already a women’s shelter in your catchment area
- > Workforce sustainability and supporting the CEO to manage this significant change in operational direction.



Workforce wellbeing

Working in the gendered violence sector is complex and can take a toll on individual and overall wellbeing. It is vitally important the board is aware of the risks and impacts of the work which can also impact organisational culture and sustainability.

It's important to have policies and processes in place to monitor workforce wellbeing and support.

Key issues that impact worker wellbeing are:

- > Exposure to continual extreme trauma content
- > Working in constantly high-risk, stressful crisis environments
- > Working in this space with own lived experience of historical or current domestic, family or sexual violence
- > Working in a patriarchal system that impacts the workforce every day
- > Working with people who are at extreme risk with limited resources and capacity that may inadvertently increase that risk
- > Working in organisations with poor workplace culture and ongoing internal conflict/tension.

Our board's cohesive relationship with the CEO was primarily driven by our shared commitment to the organisation's mission and our collective desire to support its growth and success. We recognised that providing strong support to the leadership was essential to achieving these goals. This mutual dedication also helped to foster a collaborative environment in which open communication, transparency, and respect were prioritised.

Furthermore, several board members, including myself, had experience working in the non-profit sector, which gave us an appreciation for the demands faced by the CEO. This firsthand experience strengthened our commitment to collaborate effectively with the CEO with a goal of supporting her to best fulfill responsibilities of her role.

Hannah

The potential impacts of working with gendered violence

Vicarious trauma

Trauma of clients can cause Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) - like symptoms in workers if not managed appropriately.

Vicarious trauma in the gendered violence sector refers to the emotional and psychological toll experienced by people who work with victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence. Over time, exposure to these distressing narratives and situations can lead to workers developing symptoms similar to those of PTSD themselves. It can also impact a professional's ability to provide effective support to clients.

Some symptoms of vicarious trauma

Symptoms may include heightened anxiety, depression, intrusive thoughts, emotional numbness, irritability, nightmares, and a diminished sense of personal wellbeing.

To mitigate the risk of vicarious trauma, organisations in this sector often implement self-care strategies, provide regular supervision, and offer trauma-informed training for their staff.

Recognising and addressing vicarious trauma is crucial to maintaining the wellbeing of those dedicated to helping survivors of domestic and family violence.



Compassion fatigue

Hearing stories over and over can push workers to feel a sense of helplessness that can show in reduced compassion.

Compassion fatigue is a psychological condition that can affect people working in the gendered violence sector. It arises from prolonged exposure to the suffering and trauma of survivors and can lead to a state of emotional and physical exhaustion.

Compassion fatigue in domestic, family, and sexual violence work is the result of sustained and empathetic engagement, and re-engagement, with survivors of abuse and trauma. Workers in this field, include counsellors, advocates, and social workers, often witness and hear about harrowing experiences endured by their clients. Over time, this constant exposure to suffering can lead to feelings of emotional depletion, cynicism, and a reduced ability to feel empathy or compassion.

Symptoms of compassion fatigue

Symptoms include chronic exhaustion, feelings of hopelessness, irritability, a decrease in job satisfaction, and difficulty maintaining healthy boundaries with clients. Workers experiencing compassion fatigue may find it challenging to provide the high level of support and care that victim-survivors need.

To address compassion fatigue, organisations emphasise self-care practices, provide regular supervision, and stress the importance of support from peers and mental health workers.

.....

Recognising and managing compassion fatigue is essential to ensure workers can continue to provide effective and empathetic assistance to survivors while safeguarding their wellbeing.

.....

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

Burnout

Prolonged exposure to stressors and demands can lead to chronic fatigue, disillusionment, lowered work performance, etc.

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion that can affect workers in the gendered violence sector due to the demanding and emotionally taxing nature of their roles. Burnout in providing domestic, family and sexual violence support is caused by the prolonged exposure to the stressors and challenges associated with supporting survivors of abuse and violence.

Workers in this field, including counsellors, advocates, and social workers, often face heavy workloads, high levels of responsibility, and the emotional burden of dealing with traumatic experiences on a regular basis.

Symptoms of burnout

Symptoms include chronic fatigue, a sense of cynicism or detachment from one's work, reduced job performance, and a feeling of hopelessness or disillusionment.

Burnout can significantly impact an individual's overall wellbeing and may lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover in the profession.

To address burnout, organisations prioritise self-care strategies, practice workload management and offer access to support services. Encouraging a supportive work environment and promoting the importance of seeking help when needed are crucial steps in preventing and managing burnout.

Recognising and addressing burnout is essential to ensure that those working with survivors can continue to provide effective and compassionate care.

Vicarious resilience

Stories of resilience shared by clients can have a vicarious and positive impact.

Communities and workers may experience strength, growth, and empowerment which is inspired by awareness and appreciation of victim-survivors' capacity to grow and maintain hope amid their stories of perseverance and strength.

Positive impacts of the work may include:

- > Changes in life goals and perspectives
- > Hope inspired by victim-survivors
- > Increased recognition of victim-survivor spirituality as a therapeutic resource
- > Increased self-awareness and self-care practices
- > Increased consciousness about power relative to social location
- > Increased capacity for resourcefulness
- > An increased capacity for attentiveness to the victim-survivor narratives of trauma.

It took some time for me to fully understand that I had control of my emotional wellbeing in the workspace. I had to keep developing my own awareness of the things that impacted me such as heart-breaking stories, aggravating systems failures, challenging workplace dynamics and the constant unrealistic pace. I had to develop management strategies such as clear professional boundaries, being an activist to push against those systems, not engaging in workplace politics and being clear with myself about my workplace capacity. That doesn't mean the organisation wasn't responsible for implementing the things required to support and develop a healthy staff pool. It means I have choices to make and work to do to grow and develop professionally.

Gabrielle



You are a board member of a sexual violence service. Now retired, you have a lengthy background of working with the gendered violence sector in practice and leadership roles and are well-connected across the sector.

At each board meeting, the CEO provides a report including a human resources update. You have noticed a high level of staff exits and difficulties in recruitment over the past 12 months with some positions remaining unfilled. You have also received a personal email from a staff member who has reported concerns about the culture of the service.

You have also noticed these HR issues do not seem to have impacted service delivery with increasing demand being met. You are concerned about the impacts of increasing service demand and the challenges this poses for current staff.

How would you approach this with consideration of:

- > The direct contact to you from the staff member
- > Understanding how staff are managing this increasing workload
- > The risks of increasing service demand and staffing constraints
- > Ongoing workforce sustainability
- > Potential CEO support with advocacy and strategic approaches to funding providers.

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

Psychosocial Work Health and Safety Regulations

As board members, we are responsible for ensuring the organisation has done everything it can to ensure the wellbeing of staff. Recent changes to Psychosocial WHS regulations include a strong focus on psychosocial wellbeing.

*“The amended Work Health and Safety Regulations prescribe how duty holders **must identify and manage** hazards and risks to workers’ psychological health and safety.*

Organisations need to consider and review approaches to managing psychosocial risks and fostering mentally healthy workplaces.”

How do psychosocial hazards cause harm?

“Psychosocial hazards can create stress. Stress is the body’s reaction when a worker perceives the demands of their work exceed their ability or resources to cope.

Stress creates a physiological and psychological response in the body by releasing adrenaline and cortisol, raising the heart rate and blood pressure, boosting glucose levels in the bloodstream and diverting energy from the immune system to other areas of the body.

Stress itself is not an injury but if it becomes frequent, prolonged or severe it can cause psychological and physical harm.”

Ref; Safe Work Australia. Managing psychosocial hazards at work. Code of Practice 2022



Psychological health can be negatively and positively impacted at work

TIP

What are psychosocial hazards?

- > Job demands
- > Low job control
- > Poor support
- > Lack of role clarity
- > Poor organisational change management
- > Inadequate reward and recognition
- > Poor organisational justice
- > Traumatic events or material
- > Remote or isolated work
- > Poor physical environment
- > Violence or aggression
- > Bullying
- > Harassment including sexual harassment
- > Conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions.

(Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, 2022)

The board must be willing to be challenged in their thinking and accountable for the decisions they make. This means being curious and mindful about the impact of their governance and decisions on the workforce. The board must stay in its lane and resist drifting into operational concerns or decisions that can have serious impacts.

Rosie

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

Managing psychosocial WHS hazards

An organisation must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, workers and other persons are not exposed to risks to their psychological or physical health and safety. The organisation must eliminate psychosocial risks in the workplace, or if that is not reasonably practicable, minimise these risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

Under the WHS Regulations, to manage psychosocial risks, a duty holder must:

- > Identify reasonably foreseeable hazards that could give rise to psychosocial risks
- > Eliminate risks, so far as is reasonably practicable
- > If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks, minimise the risks so far as is reasonably practicable
- > Maintain implemented control measures so they remain effective
- > Review, and if necessary, revise, control measures so as to maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, a work environment that is without risks to health and safety.

(Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, 2022)



Jot down your thoughts

What surprises me about the impacts of the work?

.....

How are we factoring workforce and cultural wellbeing processes into our budget and strategic decision-making?

.....

What questions can I ask to ensure staff are getting the support they need?

How the board can minimise the risk for psychosocial WHS hazards

When we make decisions about how the funding the organisation receives is allocated and how policies and procedures are scaffolding the work, we ensure provision for:

- > Internal practice development
- > Funded professional development and training
- > Regular and structured internal supervision
- > Specialist external professional supervision
- > Self-reflection and personal development.



The work we govern is complex and demanding. It can be tempting to cut back on essential support for workers when finances get tight. A decision to do so poses significant risk to the workforce, our clients and the community.

TIP

We have to invest in our workforce. It is not just about workplace health and safety. The work in this sector is hard and it is work most people don't do or understand. I have seen board members start their journey with a corporate hat on and heard about boards cutting budgets for staff supervision and training. I get that when money is tight this feels like a good option, but it comes at a massive cost to staff wellbeing and retention. Staff are the most valuable resource an organisation has. We pushed back successfully with the funding body, rallied with sister services, tendered with staff support, and were not prepared to compromise the budget to get more funding. We have collective power as a sector. I hope people on boards remember this when they face tough budget decisions.

Gabrielle



You are the Chairperson on the board of a small Aboriginal service in a remote area of QLD. You are an active and well-connected community member and these are your ancestral lands. Your family is well-known, and you are a respected Elder in the community.

You are passionate about the organisation as you grew up with violence in your home and are the victim-survivor of a previous violent relationship yourself. You have been a kinship carer for your nephew for several years and are supporting him through accusations of violence from his female partner.

You have been the Chairperson for five years and are also on several other boards in the community.

How do you manage your role on the board with consideration of the following:

- > Community expectations and the expectations of your role on the board
- > Your lived experience and decision-making on this board
- > Maintaining a focus on strategic governance
- > The benefits of your participation on the board – for yourself, staff, victim-survivors and the community.
- > Leadership and succession planning – e.g., supporting others to step into the Chairperson role
- > Maintaining a positive working relationship with the CEO/Manager and supporting their leadership of operational aspects of the organisation
- > How you manage confidentiality and conflicts of interest in regard to your participation across multiple boards.

The Nature of the Work



Key Take Aways

- > It's important to have policies and processes in place to monitor workforce wellbeing and support
- > Consider emerging policy reforms and change drivers in strategic planning
- > Understanding the drivers and contextual influences of gendered violence enables us to be effective advocates for change
- > Understanding the contracted funded services enables us to provide effective oversight and contribute to audit processes
- > We have an obligation to ensure quality performance, outcomes and outputs measurements and reporting
- > The physical and psychological wellbeing of staff is critical to the organisation's success
- > Prioritising worker wellbeing and professional growth is critical to workforce retention and sustainability.



Effective and appropriate professional relationships with the workforce means considering them in decision-making.

For example, ensure the organisation is providing sufficient support, internal and external supervision and skills development as well as considering capacity in strategic decisions.

TIP

Group Activity and Reflection



Cultural and Workforce Wellbeing check

Set time aside for regular cultural and workforce wellbeing checks and consider the following:

- > How to implement and evaluate wellbeing and professional development processes in the organisation
- > Safeguard a percentage of funding for psychosocial wellbeing, cultural wellbeing, and professional development – choose to invest appropriately in the workforce for long term sustainability
- > How to ensure workloads and funding are realistic and that the organisation has sufficient resources to support a healthy and capable workforce
- > How the organisation monitors, recognises and responds to potential compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma in the workgroup
- > What steps the board can take to ensure that the psychosocial and professional wellbeing of workers.

Reflective Questions

- > What are the drivers of change that will impact the gendered violence sector in the future? How are these informing our strategic planning?
- > How can we stay abreast of emerging legislative changes that impact the work of the organisation?
- > How do we ensure our oversight of funded programs is adequate?
- > Do we have a sufficient understanding of the regulatory and legal obligations of the organisation?
- > Are we as a board able to think beyond providing a service and the contractual obligations of the organisation?
- > How confident are we as a board to speak to auditors about how the service complies with funding requirements?
- > What policies and procedures are in place to manage WH&S psychosocial hazards and are they adequate?
- > How does the organisation monitor, recognise and respond to potential compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma in the workgroup?
- > How do we ensure that a workforce wellbeing and sustainability lens is brought to all new funding and strategic planning conversations?



Donna - Board Story

I experienced domestic and family violence for many years and have worked hard to educate and heal myself. I am eager to use my wisdom and skills to support mothers and children in a way that suits me.

I was asked to join the board of directors for a shelter that supports women and children. Elders in our community established this shelter many years ago. We honour this history by ensuring we do right by the Uncles and Aunties.

When I started on the board, I was learning about governance. I was fortunate to join a board of mature and nurturing women with lots of experience and skills they were willing to share.

They created a safe space where I felt comfortable asking questions and for what I needed. Our board acknowledges that we may all bring trauma and this understanding helps us all be mindful of how we interact and support each other. It's great to feel so welcome and safe in my role on the board.

Our service also provided access to training and support through ORIC (Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations). This support is invaluable. It helped me understand what governance means and the importance of connecting to the purpose and vision of the service and using this to inform plans and decisions.

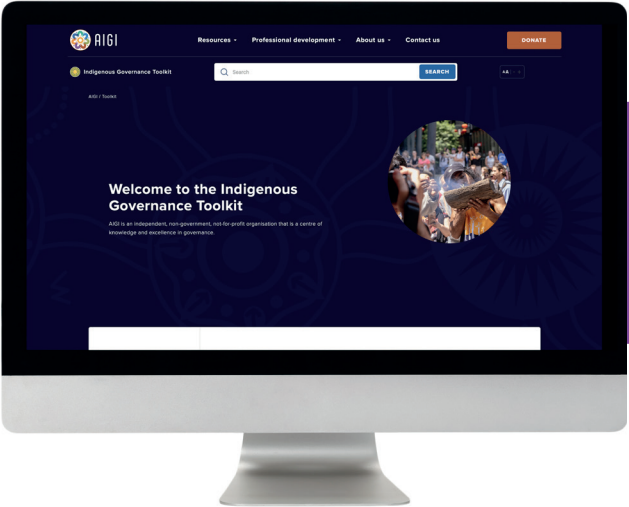
We are committed to positive and open communication and ensure everyone is included in conversations and decision-making. The Chairperson and General Manager have regular catch-ups, and discussions are noted and conveyed to the Board. This ensures everyone is working in the same direction.

.....

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be represented on boards. My advice for mainstream services is to be authentic in inviting First Nations people onto boards. Think about your intention and the positive contribution we can make to your service's purpose and mission.

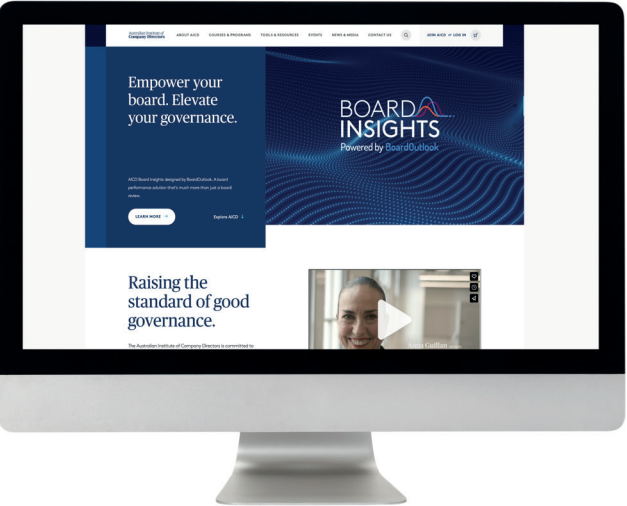
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



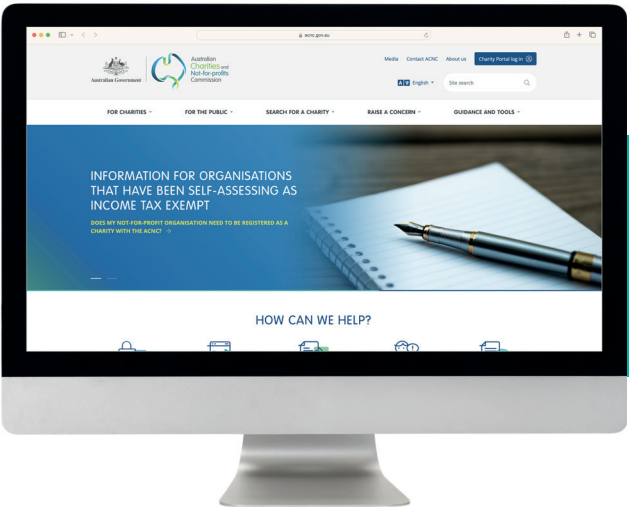
Indigenous Governance Toolkit

CLICK HERE



ACNC Governance Standards

CLICK HERE



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